

**A CRIMINOLOGICAL EXPLORATION OF FEMALE DRUG MULES  
INCARCERATED IN KGOŠI MAMPURU II AND JOHANNESBURG FEMALE  
CORRECTIONAL CENTRES**

by

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## DECLARATION

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## **DEDICATION**

**THIS DISSERTATION IS DEDICATED TO MY GRANDMOTHER,**

**NOWANDILE NOMHA MTSIMBA**

for your constant and dedicated prayers.

Enksoi Gogo.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

I give thanks to God almighty for all the strength that kept me going. For constantly reminding me that there is always light at the end of the tunnel. Thank you for equipping me with the ability, the knowledge and courage that I needed for this journey. And lastly, for bringing all the individuals mentioned below into my life.

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## ABSTRACT

The recognition of the role of females in drug trafficking was established more than 30 years ago and there are notable cases of women undertaking leading roles in this crime for almost 100 years. This phenomenon has gained popularity in South Africa as is evidenced by the number of women who are found and incarcerated for smuggling drugs into or out of South Africa. The purpose of this study was to gain an in-depth understanding of the female drug mule phenomenon and explain the reasons why female drug mules are involved in drug smuggling. The objectives of the study were to develop a profile for female drug mules incarcerated in South African correctional centres, specifically Kgoši Mampuru II and Johannesburg Female Correctional Centre; to establish risk factors for being recruited and used as drug mules; to explain the mules' motivations for being involved in drug smuggling; to determine the physical and emotional impact drug smuggling has on the drug mules; and to determine the methods used by drug mules to smuggle drugs. A qualitative research approach, with the use of one-on-one semi-structured interviews, was used to obtain information from participants. The sample comprised 20 diverse female offenders incarcerated at Kgoši Mampuru II and Johannesburg Correctional Centres. The data from the schedule of interview questions were analysed using thematic analysis, coding and categorising. It is envisaged that this research will be of significance to the criminal justice system, as recommendations on deterrence and preventative measures regarding the use of females as drug mules may be made from the findings. The general findings of this research demonstrate that a female drug mule, in the context of this study, is an African or Spanish woman that is open to methods that can produce various streams of income to support her children and family. Secondly, the findings in this dissertation revealed that women are recruited as drug mules because of their vulnerable economic state. Lastly, the most common method used to smuggle drugs revealed by participants in this research is through luggage concealment. Through this study, an in-depth insight into the history and life circumstances of female drug mules is provided. This will also help society to understand why some individuals are at risk of being recruited as mules or are motivated to engage in drug smuggling. Consequently, this research study may assist in the creation of early detection, education and awareness programmes surrounding the risks associated with drug smuggling.

**Keywords:** drug mule, drug smuggling, illicit drugs, drug trafficking, transnational organised crime.

## ISISHWANKATHELO

Ukuthatha inxaxheba kwabasetyhini ekuhambiseni iziyobisi kwaqala ukubhalwa ngako ngaphaya kweminyaka engama-30 adlulayo, kanti phantse kwiminyaka eli-100 eyadlulayo zazikho iingxelo ngamakhosikazi adlala iindima eziphambili ekuhambiseni iziyobisi. Apha eMzantsi Afrika lo mbandela uye wafumana ukwaziwa kakhulu ngenxa yeqela labasetyhini abafunyaniswe baza bavalelwa entolongweni ngenxa yokuthubelezisa iziyobisi ezingenisa okanye ezikhupha kweli loMzantsi Afrika. Injongo yesi sifundo yayikukuqonda nzulu lo mkhwa wemeyile (isilwanyana sokuthwala) yeziyobisi nokuchaza izizathu zokuba ababhinqileyo babe ziimeyile zeziyobisi. Esi sifundo sijonge ukuqulunqa ubume bomntu obhinqileyo oyimeyile yeziyobisi okhe wavalelwa kwiintolongo zaseMzantsi Afrika, ngakumbi iKgoši Mampuru II kunye neJohannesburg Correctional Centre. Okunye okujongwe sesi sifundo kukufumanisa umngcipheko abakuwo abafazi abarhwebeshwayo basetyenziswe njengeemeyile zeziyobisi; kuchazwe izinto ezikhuthaza ukuba ubani abe yimeyile yeziyobisi; kufunyaniswe ukuba ukuthubelezisa iziyobisi kumchaphazela njani umthubelezisi/imeyile emphefumleni nasemzimbeni; kubuye kufunyaniswe iindlela ezisetyenziswa zezi meyile zingabafazi ekuthubeleziseni iziyobisi. Kusetyenziswe indlela yophando eqwalasela amanani ukuze kufunyanwe ulwazi kwabo bathathe inxaxheba, kwenziwa nodliwano ndlebe lobuso ngobuso olungaqingqwanga ngqongqo. Isampulu yophando ibe ngamabanjwa abhinqileyo angama-20 ahlukeneyo navalelwe eKgoši Mampuru II naseJohannesburg Correctional Centre. Iinkcukacha zolwazi/idata ehlalutyiweyo iquka ezo nkcukacha zithathwe kwiimpendulo zemibuzo yodliwano ndlebe apho kuhlalutywe imixholo, kwafakwa iimpawu/iikhowudi zabuya zahlulahlulwa zaba ngamahlelo iinkcukacha zolwazi. Kucingwa ukuba olu phando luya kuba luncedo kwinkonzo yezobulungisa kuba okufunyanisiweyo nokucetyiswayo kunganceda ekuqulunqeni amanyathelo okuthintela nokuthibaza abaphuli mthetho ekusebenziseni abantu ababhinqileyo njengeemeyile zeziyobisi, kubabonise nabo abafazi ububi bokuba ziimeyile zeziyobisi. Uluntu ngokubanzi nalo luya kuncedakala kokufunyaniswe lolu phando. Esi sifundo siveze ukuqonda nzulu ngembali neemeko zobomi beemeyile zeziyobisi ezibhinqileyo. Olu lwazi lunganceda ukuba abantu baqonde ukuba kwenzeka kanjani ukuba abanye abantu babe semngciphekweni wokurhwebeshelwa ukusebenza njengeemeyile zeziyobisi, baqonde nokuba zintoni ezikhuthaza ubani ukuba

azibandakanye nokuthubelezisa iziyobisi. Ngoko ke olu phando lunganceda ekwenzeni iinkqubo zokuqaphela kwangoko ubani oyimeyile, ezokufundisa nezokwazisa uluntu ukuze kuthintelwe imingcipheko enxulumene nothubeleziso lweziyobisi.

**Amagama aphambili:** imeyile yeziyobisi/umthubelezisi, uthubeleziso lweziyobisi, iziyobisi ezingekho mthethweni, intengiso ziyobisi engekho mthethweni, ulwaphulo mthetho olucwangcisiweyo phakathi kwamazwe ahlukeneyo



## TSHOBOKANYO

Seabe sa batho ba bomme mo kgwebong e e seng mo molaong ya diritibatsi se kwadilwe la ntlha dingwaga di feta 30 tse di fetileng, mme mo sebakeng se se ka nnang dingwaga di le 100, go nnile le dikgetse tse di lemogilweng tsa basadi ba ba eteletse pele kgwebo e e seng mo molaong ya diritibatsi. Mo Aforikaborwa, ntlha eno e tlhageletse thata ka ntlha ya palo ya basadi ba ba tshwerweng le go golegwa ka ntlha ya go tsena gongwe go tswa ka diritibatsi ka tsela e e seng mo molaong mo Aforikaborwa.

Maitlhommo a thutopatlisiso eno e ne e le go tlhaloganya thata ntlha ya basadi ba ba tsamaisang diritibatsi e seng ka fa molaong le go tlhalosa lebaka la gore goreng basadi ba ba tsamaisang diritibatsi e seng ka fa molaong ba nna le seabe mo go tsamaiseng diritibatsi jalo. Maikaelelo a thutopatlisiso ke go dira porofaele ya basadi ba ba tsamaisang diritibatsi ka tsela e e seng mo molaong, ba ba golegilweng kwa ditikwatikweng tsa kgopololo tsa Aforikaborwa, go totilwe Ditikwatikwe tsa Kgopololo tsa Kgosi Mampuru II le Johannesburg, go bona dintlha tsa matshosetsi a gore basadi ba ngokelwe go dirisiwa jaaka batsamaisi ba ba seng mo molaong ba diritibatsi; go tlhalosa gore batsamaisi ba ba seng mo molaong ba diritibatsi ba susumediwa ke eng gore ba nne le seabe mo go tsamaiseng diritibatsi ka tsela eo; go lebelela gore go tsamaisa diritibatsi go go seng mo molaong go amile jang motho yo o tsamaisang diritibatsi mo mmeleng le mo maikutlong; le go lebelela mekgwa e e dirisiwang ke batsamaisi ba diritibatsi ba basadi go tsamaisa diritibatsi ka tsela e e seng mo molaong. Go dirisitswe molebo wa patlisiso e e lebelelang mabaka go bona tshedimosetso go tswa go bannileseabe, ka tiriso ya dipotsolotso tse di batlileng di rulagana tsa batho bongwe ka bongwe. Sampole e dirilwe ka bagolegwa ba basadi ba ba farologaneng ba le 20 ba ba golegilweng kwa Ditikwatikweng tsa Kgopololo tsa Kgosi Mampuru II le Johannesburg. *Data* e e lokolotsweng e na le *data* e e gogilweng go tswa mo sejuleng ya dipotso tsa dipotsolotso mme e lokolotswe go ya ka morero, go khouta le go aroganya *data* ka dikarolo.

Go solofelwa gore patlisiso eno e ka nna mosola mo tsamaisong ya bosiamisi jwa bosenyi ka ntlha ya fa diphitlhelelo le dikatlenegiso di ka thusa mo go tlhamiweng ga dikgato tsa thibelo go dira gore batlolamolao ba tshabe go dirisa basadi jaaka batho

ba ba tsamaisang diritibatsi e seng mo molaong le go thibela basadi go nna batsamaisi ba diritibatsi ba ba seng mo molaong. Baagi le bona ba ka ungwelwa go tswa mo diphitlhelelong tsa patlisiso eno. Ka thutopatlisiso eno, go tlamelwa ka tshedimosetso e e boteng ya lemorago le seemo sa botshelo sa basadi ba ba tsamaisang diritibatsi e seng ka fa molaong. Seno se ka thusa baagi go tlhaloganya gore goreng batho bangwe ba le mo matshosetsing a go ka ngokelwa go tsamaisa diritibatsi ka tsela e e seng mo molaong gongwe ba rotloetsega go nna karolo ya go tsamaisa diritibatsi ka tsela eo. Ka ntlha ya seo, thutopatlisiso eno e ka thusa gore go tlhamiwe mananeo a temogo ya go sa le gale, thuto le temoso go fokotsa matshosetsi a a amanang le go tsamaisa diritibatsi e seng ka fa molaong.

**Mafoko a botlhokwa:** motho yo o tsamaisang diritibatsi e seng ka fa molaong, go tsamaisa diritibatsi e seng ka fa molaong, diritibatsi tse di seng mo molaong, kgwebo ya diritibatsi, bosenyi jo bo rulaganeng jo bo ralalang ditšhaba

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>ACSA:</b>	Airports Company South Africa
<b>ASEAN:</b>	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
<b>CCTV:</b>	Closed-Circuit Television
<b>CJS:</b>	Criminal Justice System
<b>CLAW:</b>	College of Law
<b>DCS:</b>	Department of Correctional Services
<b>DIRCO:</b>	Department of International Relations and Cooperation
<b>DOH:</b>	Department of Health
<b>DOJCD:</b>	Department of Justice and Constitutional Development
<b>DSD:</b>	Department of Social Development
<b>EMCDDA:</b>	European-Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction
<b>EU:</b>	European Union
<b>FGV:</b>	Fundação Getulio Vargas
<b>IDPC:</b>	Internal Drug Policy Consortium
<b>IOL:</b>	Independent Online
<b>LCS:</b>	Living Conditions Survey
<b>LSD:</b>	Lysergic Acid Diethylamide
<b>NCS:</b>	National Security Council
<b>NGO:</b>	Non-Governmental Organisation
<b>OAS:</b>	Organisation of American States
<b>ORTIA:</b>	Oliver Tambo International Airport
<b>PMG:</b>	Parliamentary Monitoring Group
<b>QLFS:</b>	Quarterly Labour Force Survey
<b>SAA:</b>	South African Airways
<b>SADC:</b>	Southern African Development Community

<b>SAHRC:</b>	South African Human Rights Commission
<b>SAPS:</b>	South African Police Services
<b>SCCJR:</b>	Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research
<b>STATSA:</b>	Statistics South Africa
<b>UBPL:</b>	Upper-Bound Poverty Line
<b>UN:</b>	United Nations
<b>UNCND:</b>	United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs
<b>UNDP:</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNISA:</b>	University of South Africa
<b>UNODC:</b>	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
<b>UNODCCP:</b>	United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime Prevention
<b>UNWPB:</b>	United Nations Women Policy Brief
<b>US:</b>	United States
<b>USA:</b>	United States of America
<b>WADSN:</b>	West African Drug Syndicate Networks
<b>WOLA:</b>	Washington Office on Latin America

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# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **GENERAL ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

Organised crime, especially drug trafficking, is a universal security threat. Experts have contended that this phenomenon lies within the global political and economic context (Haëfele, 2001: 104). Global narcotics trafficking includes the manufacturing and export of psychoactive substances that are prohibited globally by legislative government and states because of their influence on individual health, crime and administrations. (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2017a: 5). These substances include lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD), cocaine, heroin, marijuana, methamphetamine, ecstasy, as well as an increasing number of synthetic drugs (Kan, 2016: 3).

The availability of illicit drugs such as LSD, cannabis, heroin, ecstasy, cocaine and amphetamines in South Africa has been slow but steady since the early 1990s (Parry, 1997: 2). Illicit drugs were first introduced through the European route as well as various other sea routes from Latin America (Kumar, 2015: 1). Research by Van Heerden and Minnaar (2016: 6) reveals that the most common transit route in Africa for drugs, such as heroin (from Afghanistan and East Asia) and cocaine (from South America) is South Africa. These illicit drugs are mainly intended for European and Southern African markets (Van Heerden & Minnaar, 2016: 16). Statistics reveal that South Africa is among Africa's most advanced countries and has challenges of substance addiction and trafficking. (UNODC, 2015a: 1). Illicit drug trafficking is one of those challenges, as a result of weak border controls (UNODC, 2015a: 1).

In 2019, Cocaine worth R720 million was confiscated from a ship in the port of Ngqura (Port Elizabeth) in an international drug bust (Sicetsha, 2019). South Africa has succumbed to a widespread of crack-cocaine, such as other countries located on main drug trafficking routes. The relative affluence of South Africa in the region makes it an attractive emerging market (Kibble, 1998; Parry, 1997; Simon, 1998). This has the ability to disrupt the post-apartheid transformation process and can

weaken the fragile structure of South African society that is already characterised by rampant crime rates (United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention [UNODCCP], 1999: 2).

One dimension of the organised drug trade is the use of female couriers, popularly known as “drug mules” to smuggle drugs in and out of South Africa. The transportation of illicit substances across the borders of a country is a criminal offence that leads to punishment and consequences. It has become a norm in South Africa to encounter headlines that involve South African women trafficking drugs, for example, South African Airways (SAA) cabin crew employees (male and female) who were arrested in Hong Kong for smuggling cocaine worth more than R45 million (Anon, 2019a) and Nokuphila Mtshali, who was arrested in Mauritius for smuggling 528g of heroin worth approximately R3,3 million into that country (Anon, 2019b). Mtshali later cooperated with the police to deliver drugs (in a planned operation) that led to the arrest of two Nigerian suspects (Anon, 2019b). The success of drug trafficking is also influenced by corruption, which results to increased crime rates and inequality (UNODC, 2015b: 1). The National Commissioner Spokesperson Brigadier Vish Naidoo stated that “drug trafficking in South Africa [is] rife because of the availability of various transit points such as the airports and harbours” (Nair, 2012: 1). Haëfele (2001: 105) adds that the lifting of all sanctions against South Africa, lead to unconstrained movement of international goods and people which caused a rise in smuggling of illegal goods and drugs.

## **1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

The illicit trade in narcotics and its impact on other crime and corruption poses national security threats in countries such as Columbia, China and the United States of America (USA) (Dunlop, 2018: 1). This is also true for South Africa. Moreover, the involvement of females in the smuggling of drugs has also increased.

In 1986, Venezuelan criminologist, Rosa del Olmo, was the first to note the involvement of women in the drug trade (Fleetwood, 2017: 279). Campbell (2008: 233) adds that the recognition of females in drug trafficking was established more than 30 years ago but there are notable cases of women undertaking leading roles in

drug smuggling for almost 100 years. The concealed nature of the drug trade, particularly the involvement of females, makes statistical estimates challenging (Fleetwood, 2014a: 7). Regardless of prevalent notions that the number of women engaged in the smuggling of drugs is growing, the reality is much more complex. Information from the United Nations (UN) infers that female drug mules “has not expanded disproportionately compared to men” (United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs [UNCND], 2011), yet there is an absence of information to undertake detailed analysis, as sexual orientation is not routinely documented in seizure information (Fleetwood & Haas, 2011: 194). The European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA, 2012: 8) confirms that utilising humans as drug mules has become known as a compelling way for drug trafficking syndicates to traffic drugs. Media reports, both nationally and abroad, frequently report on the utilisation of South Africans as drug mules (Tsotetsi, 2012: 1).

South African women are particularly targeted because of their vulnerability and social and economic status therefore drug trafficking syndicates progressively focus on South Africans to smuggle drugs between nations (Tsotetsi, 2012: 1). In 2011, 149 people, of whom 22 were South Africans, were caught for drug possession at the OR Tambo International Airport (ORTIA) in South Africa (Nair, 2012: 1). Nelson Kgwete, from the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO), stated that, 170 South Africans were imprisoned for drug smuggling alone in Brazilian correctional centres (The Citizen, 2017: 1). In 2016, “approximately a dozen South African women and several South African men have been arrested at Hong Kong airport for drug trafficking” (Wotherspoon, 2016: 1). South Africans who smuggle cocaine, methamphetamine or heroin into countries with severe and harsh laws also face the death penalty. For example, Janice Bronwyn Linden was executed by lethal injection in China in 2011 (Independent Online [IOL], 2011: 1).

Also, the publicised experiences of South African women who are imprisoned do not seem to deter new recruits. There is also limited scientific research explaining the latter. As a result, the researcher embarked on this study to explore the above-mentioned problem and specifically the motives for females to get involved in organised drug smuggling which poses an international security risk to South Africa and other countries.

### **1.3 VALUE/IMPORTANCE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

This section highlights the value and importance of this study particularly where drug smuggling and the use of female drug mules are concerned. Furthermore, the research aim, objectives, research purpose, research questions and a summary of the research methodology are discussed.

#### **1.3.1 Value and importance of the study**

This study provides an in-depth presentation of the context of female drug mule recruitment, involvement in drug smuggling and the risk factors for being recruited as a drug mule as well as the reasons for females to engage in drug smuggling. As a result, this research is of significance to the Criminal Justice System (CJS), South African Police Services (SAPS) and O.R Tambo International Airport (ORTIA) officials as, from the findings, recommendations on deterrence and preventative measures against the use of females as drug mules during drug trafficking, may be developed.

Society may also benefit from the findings of this research as an in-depth insight into the history and life circumstances of female drug mules is provided. This will assist society in understanding why some individuals are at risk of being recruited as mules or are motivated to engage in drug smuggling. Consequently, this research study may contribute to the early detection, education and awareness programmes surrounding the risks associated with drug smuggling.

In addition, the information disseminated from this research study will benefit criminology as a field of study and lead to further research as there is limited literature on the topic, particularly in South Africa.

#### **1.3.2 Research aim, objectives and purpose of the study**

The focus of a study should define what is included and what is excluded from the research (Fouché & De Vos, 2011: 116). A research aim is the main objective or the comprehensive motive of a research project. Research aims are usually at the outset of a statement of research studies objectives (or questions) because of their generality. They are wide and introductory rather than specific and focused (Thomas

& Hodges, 2010: 3). Determining the aim of a research project leads to determining its objectives. Research objectives may be divided into bound to be achieved and incidental goals. They should: be closely linked to the research problem; be achievable; include all facets of the problem; consider the available resources, including time; be ordered in a rational sequence; (Newell & Burnard, 2011: 4).

De Vos, Strydom, Fouché and Delport (2011: 117) discuss the purpose of a study as being exploratory, descriptive, evaluative and explanatory. The aim of this study was to:

- gain an in-depth understanding of the drug mule phenomenon and explain the reasons why female drug mules are involved in drug smuggling.

In order to achieve the main research aim stated above, the objectives of the study were as follows:

- To develop a profile of female drug mules incarcerated in South African correctional centres, with specific reference to Kgoši Mampuru II and Johannesburg correctional centres.
- To establish risk factors for being recruited and used as a female drug mule.
- To explain the female mule's motivation(s) for being involved in drug smuggling.
- To determine the physical and emotional impact drug smuggling has on the female drug mule.
- To determine the methods used by female drug mules to smuggle drugs.

### **1.3.3 Research questions**

Research questions do not lack change: they evolve or are modified, as researchers work on the various stages of the design process, study the literature, incorporate theory and build a conceptual framework (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2011: 111-112).

Bless, Higson-Smith and Kagee (2006: 19) highlight that research questions should be specific, precise and well-constructed. Research questions are focused on the research problem and to analyse the problem to ensure it can be answered in a

single study. A research problem involves gathering new information or reviewing existing data regarding a phenomenon (Babbie & Mouton, 2007: 75). Neuman (2000: 142) adds that research studies revolve around research questions, concentrating on a particular problem within a wide subject field. In short, research questions are the questions the research seeks to address (Ratele, 2006: 540).

In this instance, the main research question was: What is the context of female drug mule recruitment and what are the reasons that female drug mules get involved?

Considering the above, the following key research questions guided the study:

- What is the profile of a female drug mule incarcerated at the Kgoši Mampuru and Johannesburg female correctional centres?
- What are the risk factors contributing to females being targeted or recruited as drug mules?
- What motivates females to become or continue being drug mules?
- What is the physical and emotional impact of smuggling drugs on the mules and/or their families?
- What are the methods used by mules to smuggle the drugs?

#### **1.3.4 Methodology**

This study was qualitative in nature. The study made use of semi-structured interviews, which were conducted with 20 female offenders incarcerated at the Kgoši Mampuru II (n=10) and Johannesburg correctional (n=10) centres. The use of semi-structured interviews was regarded as appropriate for the study because this data collection method allowed for the participants to elaborate on their responses and it created an opportunity for further discussion. The use of semi-structured interviews also made it feasible for the participants to give detailed insights into their experiences in their own words. The use of the interview guide (see Annexure D) ensured that the interviews remained within the scope of the study. The data generated were analysed using thematic analysis and coding. The methodology of this study is explained in detail in Chapter Three.

## **1.4 DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS**

“Definitions are used to establish arguments and communication” (De Vos et al, 2011: 32). To prevent vagueness or uncertainty, definitions enhance the understanding of concepts in a simple, clear way (De Vos et al, 2011: 32). The following key concepts are discussed briefly to get a better understanding of the study:

### **1.4.1 Drug**

The Department of Social Development (DSD, 2017: 17) defines a drug in the National Drug Masterplan (DSD, 2017) in terms of its usage. In medicine, it refers to any substance with the potential to prevent or cure disease or enhance physical or mental well-being (Nqadini, Van Stade & Cowely, 2008: 3). In pharmacology it refers to any chemical agent that alters the biochemical or physiological processes of tissues or organisms. Based on the Medicines and Related Substances Act 101 of 1965, the term “drug” refers to a psychoactive or dependence-producing substance, more specifically, to those that are illicit (Department of Health [DoH] 1965: 3).

The Drug and Drug Trafficking Act 140 of 1992 defines a drug as any dependence-producing substance, any dangerous dependence producing substance or any undesirable dependence producing substance (Department of Justice, 1992: 2). A dangerous dependence-producing substance is defined as any substance or any plant from which a substance can be manufactured that is included in Part II of Schedule 2 (DoJ & CD, 1992: 2) (see Annexure F).

According to the UNODC (2010: 27), “the term illicit drugs is used to identify substances that are under global restriction (and may or may not have licit medical uses) but are manufactured, trafficked and/or illegally consumed”. In this study, a drug is defined as any illicit dependence producing substance that can be chemically amalgamated and manufactured for illegal profitable purposes and use which may also lead to long-lasting and permanent health consequences.

### **1.4.2 Drug mule**

The concept of a “drug mule” is a social construct and is not defined in the Drug and



Drug Trafficking Act 140 of 1992. Hübschle (2008) defines a drug mule as a “person smuggling illicit drugs with him or her across national borders, including smuggling in or out of an international plane, [sic: aircraft] for an international drug syndicate.” According to Fleetwood (2014a: 16), drug mules are individuals who have the role of carrying drugs across international borders and are characterised by a lack of control or choice. Haas (2017: 310) defines a drug mule as any individual who is “hired” to transport drugs across international borders, usually for a fixed fee.

The EMCDDA (2012: 3) concludes that a drug mule is a drug carrier that is paid and manipulated or deceived into transportation of drugs across international borders but have no further economic interest in drugs (EMCDDA, 2012: 3). In this study, a drug mule is a female who illegally transports drugs in her possession across international borders to receive a form of incentive, in terms of financial gratification, once the drugs are delivered to the intended destination.

#### **1.4.3 Drug smuggling**

Drug smuggling is defined by Decker and Chapman (2008: 18) as an illegal act of transporting drugs, which may be across another country, state or region. According to Prezelj and Gaber (2005: 5), drug smuggling is the division of illegal drug trade that takes place across national borders. In this research, drug smuggling is defined as the transportation of drugs, by an individual or a drug syndicate across either national or international borders, by air, land or sea for personal financial gain.

#### **1.4.4 Drug trafficking**

The UNODC (2018) defines drug trafficking as a global illegal trade comprising the manufacturing, cultivation, shipment and sale of substances, which are subject to drug prohibition laws. Section 4 of the Drug and Drug Trafficking Act 140 of 1992 defines drug trafficking as the use or possession of narcotics and other activities related to the production or sale of certain substances, or the gain or conversion of proceeds from such crimes (DoJ & CD, 1992: 1). For the purpose of this study, drug trafficking is an intentional criminal act committed and led by drug trafficking syndicates who recruit individuals to manufacture and/or transport drugs for illicit financial gain.

#### **1.4.5 Drug trafficking syndicate**

Kumar (2015: 2) defines a drug trafficking syndicate as an affiliation of drug manufacturers aimed at maintaining the availability and costs of illicit drugs and having a partnership and control of illicit trade. A drug trafficking syndicate is explained by Desroaches (2007: 6) as a small group of individuals operating in highly controlled structures to produce, transport and/or distribute large quantities of one or more illicit drugs.

In this study, a drug trafficking syndicate includes an illegal act committed by two or more individuals with the aim of manufacturing, supplying and selling illicit drug substances for the return of self-enrichment and financial benefit. Drug trafficking syndicates are normally individuals who are influenced by money and are well respected and feared. These individuals may also use violence to intimidate and control people in order to protect and/or advance their drug trade.

#### **1.4.6 Female**

The Cambridge Dictionary (2019) defines the term “female” as belonging or relating to women, or the sex that is distinguished biologically to give birth to young or produce eggs.

It is also important to define the word “woman” as it has a different meaning from female. The term woman is associated with gender and female is associated with sex. Meyer (2016: 556) identifies a woman as genetic, anatomical, gender performance, biological and/or gender identity. The abovementioned terms are used interchangeably throughout the dissertation.

#### **1.4.7 Illegal**

Illegal means not constitutional, according to the law and legislation (The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English, 1990, sv. ‘illegal’). Kumar (2015: 2) adds that “illicit” is synonymous with illegal: something that is prohibited by the law.

In this study, illegal is a term that defines a wrongful act performed by an individual that is against or prohibited in a country or state’s acts and laws.

#### **1.4.8 Transnational organised crime**

Transnational organised crime relates to the association of persons who work transnationally for the purpose of acquiring control, financial and/or commercial incentives, fully or in part by illegal means, while protecting their illegal acts through corruption and/or abuse, or through a transnational organisational structure (National Security Council [NSC], 2011: 1).

The United Kingdom Home Office (2011) defines transnational organised crime as individuals, commonly operating with others, with the ability and capacity to commit severe and violent crimes on an ongoing basis, including control, planning and management functions, and rewards those associated.

According to the UNODC (2015b: 1), transnational organised crime can be defined as a serious criminal activity motivated by profit, with international consequences. Most definitions of transnational organised crime make reference to the composition, scale of activities, degree of permanence and cohesiveness, and propensity of violence of organised criminal groups (UNODC, 2015b: 1).

The term transnational organised crime is operationally defined by the researcher as an illicit business or organisation that focuses on cross border drug smuggling and produces illicit drugs and substances where individuals involved are motivated by making money for their own personal gain.

#### **1.5 STUDY LIMITATIONS**

According to Simon and Goes (2003: 1), every research study has limitations, no matter how well it is conducted and implemented. Limitations are matters and events that occur in a study that are beyond the control of the researcher. They limit the extent to which a study can go, and often affect the outcome and findings that can be drawn (Simon & Goes, 2003: 1). Labaree (2019) adds that study limitations are those characteristics of a methodology that impact or influence the interpretation of research results of a study. Refer to Chapter Five for the recommendations in relation to the study limitations.

Below is a brief summary of the limitations identified in this study:

### **1.5.1 Limited previous research in South Africa**

The researcher relied on outdated and international literature on female drug mules as there is limited research on the topic in South Africa. Neither are there official statistics on drug mules incarcerated in South African correctional facilities.

### **1.5.2 Access to South African Police Services (SAPS) officials based at ORTIA**

Access to interview SAPS or customs officials stationed at the ORTIA was a limitation as the researcher received no response from the allocated research manager after approval from the SAPS research office was granted. As a result, interviews planned with the SAPS or customs officials stationed at the ORTIA did not take place. SAPS or customs officials would have been able to make valuable inputs into the research, especially regarding the modus operandi on the crime in question as well as preventative measures.

### **1.5.3 Study limitations experienced while conducting interviews at the two-female correctional centres**

#### **1.5.3.1 Lack of participation**

When the researcher arrived at Kgoši Mampuru II and Johannesburg correctional centres, a list with names of females incarcerated for dealing in drugs (drug smuggling) was provided. The prospective participants were informed about the interviews before hand. Some of the research subjects refused to participate as they felt that they had nothing to gain by taking part in the study. However, the researcher explained the purpose of the study. The researcher also had to play the role of an emotional supporter since some participants were very emotional during the interviews; as a result, the emotional episodes hampered participation by participants. Important to note is that the social worker was also available (not in the interview room, as this would breach the confidentiality agreement) and willing to assist in this regard. Moreover, breaks were taken and participants were encouraged to take their time and only share information they felt comfortable revealing. By the end of the data collection process, all participants who volunteered to participate in the study did so freely.

### **1.5.3.2 Language barrier**

The researcher was informed that some of the participants on the list were not South African and could barely speak English, which created a further challenge. The majority of participants for this study were foreign nationals but only two from Kgoši Mampuru II could not speak English. The researcher did not use a professional interpreter or translator, she received assistance from other offenders who are fluent in English, Portuguese and Spanish. The researcher agreed with the translators that the confidentiality of the participants would not be breached. The participants were willing and agreed to share their experiences with the translating offender. Fortunately, the translators were also participants in the study and were familiar with one another. The language barrier created a challenge for the researcher as those interviews took longer than the others did, and the researcher feels that some important information may have been lost in translation. Nonetheless, to overcome this, the researcher asked the questions more than once to allow adequate translation.

## **1.6 DISSERTATION LAYOUT**

The following is an overview of the dissertation:

### **Chapter 1: General orientation**

Chapter One provides the introduction and orientation to the study. This chapter introduces the reader to the phenomenon of female drug mules by providing key concepts and the problem statement. The aim, objectives and significance of the study are also highlighted in Chapter One.

### **Chapter 2: Literature study and theoretical explanations**

Chapter Two reviews the available literature on the phenomenon of female drug mules. This chapter also identifies specific criminological theories that explain the reasons why females become drug mules.

### **Chapter 3: Research methodology**

This chapter provides an in-depth discussion of the research methods and

techniques used in the study.

#### **Chapter 4: Data analysis, interpretation and deductions**

Chapter Four discusses in depth how data were collected using specific instruments for data collection, and how the findings were analysed and interpreted. This chapter provides different levels of data analysis and data representation.

#### **Chapter 5: Findings and recommendations**

Chapter Five discusses the findings of the study, recommendations, limitations and the conclusion.

### **1.7 SUMMARY**

This chapter consisted of a general orientation and overview of drug trafficking as a transnational organised crime including the use of females as drug mules. It also highlights the problem statement related to the study which focuses on female drug mules incarcerated in two female correctional centres in the Gauteng Province of South Africa. The researcher also discussed the aim, value, importance and objectives of this study. Key concepts that are frequently used in this study, such as “drug trafficking”, “drug mule” and “drug smuggling” were provided in order to provide clear understanding of these terms.

The succeeding chapter will focus on a review of the literature which aims to explain how and why women become drug mules through the exploration of available literature and criminological theories.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE STUDY AND THEORETICAL EXPLANATIONS**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

A literature review was conducted to investigate previous studies about the use of females as “drug mules” and their reasons for being involved in drug smuggling. According to Semmens (2011: 67), a literature review plays a distinguishing role in a research study as it enables the researcher to obtain an in-depth understanding of the subject at hand. A literature review serves the following purposes (Grinnell & Unrau, 2005: 424):

- To show readers that the researcher understands the existing issues related to his or her study.
- To identify ways in which the study is comparable to, or distinct from, other studies that have already conducted.
- To conceptualise and introduce the variables (or constructs) that will be used throughout the study.

This discussion commences with drug trafficking as a transnational organised crime, in that it incorporates the occurrence of female drug mules internationally. Additionally, the motivation for partaking in drug smuggling is discussed as well as the profile of a drug mule. Thereafter the recruitment of women as drug mules is observed and the measures to prevent and combat drug smuggling are discussed. Lastly, the theoretical framework is concisely analysed.

The World Drug Report (UNODC, 2018: 26-27) clarifies that the number of women arrested for drug related charges in 98 countries between 2012 and 2016, represented 10 per cent of all the persons who were brought into contact with the CJS for drug related offences. Although the proportion of women represented by the latter averaged 10 per cent, the figure varied widely; ranging from less than one per cent in some countries to 40 per cent in others, with the majority of countries reporting a proportion of between seven and 16 per cent (UNODC, 2018: 27).

The United Nations Women Policy Brief (UNWPB, 2014: 3) confirms that two-thirds of women incarcerated in federal correctional centres in the United States (US) are there as a result of non-violent drug offences, while the female population almost doubled in Latin American correctional facilities between 2006 and 2011, dominated by offenders' involvement in drug-related offences.

According to Dunlop (2018: 46), drug-related crimes incorporate the South African Misuse of Drugs Act of 1971 and the Drugs Trafficking Act 140 of 1992, ranging from illegal usage, to possession and trafficking of narcotics. Lebone (2014: 944) adds that there were 292 689 drug-related crimes (including drug smuggling) committed in 2016/17 (by both males and females), which is an increase of 537.4 per cent since 1994. In September 2019, the SAPS reported that 232 657 drug-related crimes were committed in the period 2018/2019 (SAPS, 2019a: 124). According to the SAPS (2019a: 51), drug-related crimes are usually detected as a result of police action and are usually not reported by society to employment intelligence or law enforcement personnel. The target for SAPS was to increase crimes of unlawful possession and dealing in drugs by 47,36 per cent (SAPS (2019a: 51). However, none of the provinces reached the set target. This may be attributed to inadequate intelligence-driven operations and the non-utilisation of informers (SAPS, 2019b: 124). The SAPS crime statistics, however, do not specify the different types of drug-related crimes under that crime category. The local situation is complicated as far as female involvement as drug mules is concerned. South Africa has no official statistics on drug mules incarcerated in South African correctional facilities. As a result, there is a small scale of studies available for researchers to rely on when providing an estimate of relevant statistics.

Despite the abovementioned, the researcher accumulated factors that are included in the process of smuggling illicit drugs (drug smuggling) which are discussed in this chapter. The discussion highlights drug trafficking as a transnational organised crime as well as international research conducted on female drug mules. Thereafter, the profile of a female drug mule is presented; the motivational factors that cause women to partake in drug smuggling; the recruitment process of drug mules; preventative measures contained in the South African legislation regarding drug smuggling; and lastly, the theoretical explanations for drug smuggling.



## **2.2 DRUG TRAFFICKING AS A TRANSNATIONAL ORGANISED CRIME**

Since the birth of democracy in 1994, drug trafficking and drug abuse have been a concern and a priority on the agenda of the Government of South Africa, as it impacts the well-being of citizens and the development and growth of the country. (Matsenyane, 2014: 15).

Van Duyne (2004: 188) defines organised crime as a method of operating actively through illegal means, which indicates that the laws regulating the socio-economic structure of society are disregarded. The author also states that organised crime is therefore not limited to particular race, criminal or social spheres. It involves the exchange of illicit goods and services where there is an existing demand even though such goods and services may be sold at a lower cost because fraudulent criminal activities reduce the cost of doing business (Van Duyne, 2004: 188).

Transnational organised crime is an industry that is constantly revolving, by creating new forms of crime and adapts to markets. It is an illicit business that knows no rules or border and transcends social, linguistic, cultural and geographical boundaries (UNODC, 2018: 1). Cybercrime, hijacking, drug trafficking, human trafficking and poaching – all of these are high profile crimes that make news headlines on an almost daily basis, and each one is linked to a highly complex network of criminal syndicates (Reid, 2016: 49). Hübschle (2014: 43) states that there is a connection between prostitution, drug trafficking, drug and alcohol use and human trafficking. As reported by the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA, 2016) and the International Drug Policy Consortium (IDPC, 2016), the global involvement of women in the illicit drug trade is on the increase but remains diverse and situational. Women resort to drug smuggling to support their drug addictions and some women who are victims of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation are compelled into drug smuggling (Hübschle, 2014: 44). Drug trafficking, as a transnational organised crime, is the focus of this section. As explained in sub-section 1.4.4, for the purpose of this study, drug trafficking is defined as the smuggling of illegal drugs on aircrafts in national and international public airports. There are numerous cases of drugs being smuggled by females to countries, such as Brazil, Thailand and Colombia, from South Africa. These include South African citizens, Tessa Beetge who served six

years in prison in Brazil and Nonthando Phendu who served 10 years in Thailand for drug smuggling (Lindeque, 2014; Harvey, 2019). According to UNODC as cited in Ellis, Stein, Thomas and Meintjies (2012: 48), Africa produces the third largest quantity of cannabis in the world, specifically in South Africa. Even though some of the dagga is trafficked from neighbouring countries such as Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Lesotho and Swaziland, and transported to Europe and other countries, South Africa is counted amongst the world's largest dagga producers.

According to UNODC (2015a), drug trafficking remains the most profitable mode of business for criminals, with an estimated value of USD\$ 320 billion (R4 702 billion) globally. In 2009, the illicit financial flow from drug trafficking and other transnational organised crimes placed the world's estimated annual value of drug sales of cocaine and cannabis as the highest at USD\$85 billion (R124 billion) and USD\$74,7 billion (R110 billion) respectively (UNODC, 2011: 5). According to Kar and Spanjers (2015: 13), a Washington based research organisation, after Nigeria, South Africa has the highest level of illicit financial outflows on the continent, having grown from USD\$1,29 billion in 2002 to USD\$23,73 billion in 2011. South Africa, which is regarded as Africa's second largest economy, experienced a boom of drug trafficking after 1994 when its borders opened up after years of global isolation (Geldenhuys, 2016: 11). The drug demand in South Africa began after the end of the apartheid era, when lawmakers focused on nation-building and not on fighting transnational crime, which resulted in drug syndicates flourishing, taking advantage of the country's advanced financial system and transport networks (Geldenhuys, 2016: 11). Foreign nationals involved in organised crime prefer to traffic narcotics in countries such as South Africa, where there are opportunities to make money. They look at countries in the same way that businessmen do, except that they also look at the strength of law enforcement and whether or not there are well-established criminal networks and extradition treaties with their home countries (Geldenhuys, 2016: 11).

According to Kilmer and Hoorens (2008: 20), the success of the drug market is based on the quantity and the availability of the drug. In order for a drug supply to be determined in a country, specifically through the use of drug mules, one has to establish if there is a demand for illicit drugs. Van Heerden (2014: 20) states that, even though South Africa does not produce and grow most high-end drugs such as

heroin and cocaine, it has a variety of drugs available for use. Hübschle (2014: 13) states that common drugs are often sold in South Africa's inner city areas. As a result, South Africa is gaining recognition as a transit point for illicit drugs, exposing South Africans to drug trafficking syndicates that exploit vulnerable South Africans for drug smuggling (Tsotetsi, 2012: 1). As explained by Geldenhuys (2016: 13), organised crime is a network of criminal activities, which has a negative effect on communities as it funds many other illegal activities besides trafficking drugs. Factors including high costs of living, high unemployment rates, weak border control and a lack of awareness and knowledge on the risks of drug abuse, all make South Africa an ideal market for transnational organised crime and drug traffickers (Grove 1995: 5). Due to porous borders, well-structured criminal networks and corrupt officials, South Africa seems to be an ideal place for organised crime groups (Minnaar, 1999: 13). International and local drug syndicates have utilised corrupt South African citizens, weak borders and officials in order to smuggle drugs (Minnaar, 1999: 13).

### **2.2.1 The occurrence of female drug mules internationally**

The worldwide concern of drug trafficking has been recognised as "the production, development, sale and distribution of drugs which relate to drug preclusion regulations" (UNODC, 2015d: 8). Drug trafficking is an international industry that has operated for more than 40 years. The global drug market includes many linked stages, ranging from production to utilisation, that satisfy an insatiable drug demand. The most challenging stage is drug trafficking (Jenner, 2011: 902). Furthermore, the 2015 world drug report reveals that, since 2010, drug trafficking, and the devastation and violence that often accompanies the crime, has become a serious social problem globally, particularly for women (UNODC, 2015: 8). Although there are no comprehensive global data trends in women arrested for drug-related crimes, there is a common perception that the number of women arrested for taking part in drug smuggling is increasing worldwide, especially among women who are victims of abuse, lacking economic opportunities and/or education (UNODC, 2018: 26).

The Resolution No.55/1 made by the United Nations Commission on Narcotics Drugs (UNCND, 2009) titled, "Promoting international cooperation in addressing the

involvement of women and girls in drug trafficking as couriers”, aimed to conduct a gender analysis of the international drug trade. This was the first attempt to measure the extent of women’s involvement in the drug smuggling globally. The study reports an estimation of 20 per cent of drug traffickers worldwide have been involved in drug arrests. However, the limited information available to UNODC indicates that the involvement of girls and women in drug smuggling has not increased significantly compared to men (UNCND, 2011: 196).

These claims are based on a basis of two data sets that the UN collects frequently: the annual report survey (the source for the world drug report), and individual drug arrests reports (submitted by various countries to the UN). These statistics are based on individual accounts of drug seizures hence they cannot be viewed as evidence of offending against women. This is a limitation noted in the report. More importantly, accounts of cases of women being arrested for trafficking drugs have increased in countries like Zambia, China, India and Nigeria (Sumter, Berger-Hill, Whitaker & Woods, 2016: 4). The Organisation of American States (OAS, 2013: 60) highlights that, between 2007 and 2012, the number of people incarcerated for drug trafficking in Brazil increased by 123 per cent, from 60 000 to 134 000. However, there has also been a steady and significant rise in drug-related arrests among women as 80% of female offenders in Brazilian correctional centres have been sentenced to drug trafficking.

According to Fleetwood and Haas (2011: 196), women represent approximately 20 per cent of drug smugglers who were part of the drug arrests globally. However, Bailey (2013: 118) alludes that there is enough evidence that indicates that the participation of women in crime, specifically drug smuggling, is increasing.

According to UNODC (2018: 26), available data suggest that, in some countries, the number of females brought into contact with the CJS for drug smuggling offences decreased between 2012 and 2016. It is arduous to ascertain whether this represents declining patterns or incoherent coverage by countries over time. Furthermore, it is not known whether the rise in the number of women incarcerated for drug smuggling is due to the increased number of women involved in drug trafficking; the rise in police officials combat measures regarding drug-related

offences; the increase in the prosecution of crimes in which women are usually more represented; or because there has been an improvement in reporting and awareness of such offences. (UNODC, 2018: 26).

In South Africa, media articles suggest that the majority of drug mules are female. In 2012, it was established that more than 13 South Africans were arrested aboard direct flights from South Africa (Van Heerden, 2014: 87). Most South African women are arrested for smuggling drugs internationally to countries such as Brazil (Van Heerden, 2014: 90). South Africa is not the only country that uses females as drug mules, for example, the Delhi criminal justice agencies in India reported an increase of approximately 15 per cent from 2005 to 2006 in female offenders incarcerated for drug smuggling (Sumter et al, 2016: 5). Punjab police in Malwa reported that, in the first five months of 2012, there was a 12 per cent rise in the number of incarcerated women (Sumter et al, 2016: 5). The Public Relations Officer for the Drug Enforcement Commission in Lusaka, Zambia, stated that within seven days four women had been arrested at their international airport in Zambia and he was “disheartened with the rising pattern of drug smuggling as it is corrupting to the nobility of women in [the] society” (Sumter et al, 2016: 5). In China, court statistics reveal that women represent a portion of approximately 250 individuals that are arrested for drug smuggling, with a pattern showing that female offenders are “women from local areas that help their foreign boyfriend’s traffic drugs into the Chinese mainland” (Sumter et al, 2016: 4-5). The role of women as drug mules in Vietnam is more significant than that of their male counterparts, particularly for West African Drug Syndicate Networks (WADSN) (Luong, 2015: 45).

In the last few years, reports from Britain revealed growth in the number of female offenders in British correctional centres who were from the Caribbean, particularly, Jamaica (Ford, 2003: 2). As explained by Ford (2003: 2), most (96 per cent) of female offenders were incarcerated for drug related crimes. There were mostly single mothers, financially disadvantaged and from vulnerable urban and rural societies; most of the women had no prior criminal history or understanding of the repercussions (Ford 2003: 2). Researchers believe these women are easy targets for male drug recruiters who exploit their desperation and their fear of consequences for not complying (Bailey, 2013: 118). According to Hübschle (2010: 28–29), female

drug mules are dupes in the drug trafficking trade and are simply substituted by someone who is vulnerable because of their drug addictions or social and economic conditions.

From the above discussion, it can be noted that one of the detectable patterns in drug mules recruited by drug trafficking syndicates is that women are more prone to be recruited as mules in comparison to males. This is because syndicates can take advantage of women and their desperation to take care of their families, exploit their poverty and their fear of threats or violence against them or their families.

## **2.3 MOTIVATION FOR PARTAKING IN DRUG SMUGGLING**

There is minimum information available on the factors that lead women to commit crimes, and the manner in which these factors connect which lead to particular patterns of offending. Nor is there much known about how female offenders experience life in a correctional centre or the effect of their incarceration on their well-being, the relationships they have with people in their lives or their health (Artz, Hoffman-Wanderer & Moulton, 2012: 1). Criminologists have until recently, focused their theories almost entirely on the offending or victimisation of men with women receiving little to no attention (Bailey, 2013: 117). The accelerated rate of growth in the female correctional population, including women incarcerated as a result of drug trafficking, is due to many factors (Artz et al, 2012: 19). However, it is difficult to determine how much of this growth is based on the changes in social policy and legislation or an actual shift in female behaviour. (Artz et al, 2012: 19).

Barlow and Weare (2019: 95) conducted research in United Kingdom (UK) focusing on women as co-offenders, their offending motivations and pathways into crime. Although the study was limited in terms of geographic area, representativeness of the sample, ethnicity and sexuality, size as well as the socio-economic background, important themes and patterns did arise. The findings showed economic circumstances and significant life events as motivating factors for committing criminal activities.

- ***Economic circumstances:*** Economic circumstances motivated some women in their involvement in offending. The participants owned that economic

aspirations for themselves and their families played a role their involvement in criminality (Barlow & Weare, 2019: 95).

- **Significant life events:** Another offending motivation found in this study was that of a “significant life event” (Barlow & Weare, 2019: 95) which is a term used by the researchers in order to define events that have significantly impacted or affected women’s lives, decisions, and subsequent actions. Mental health, sexual abuse or losing custody of their children were regarded as significant life events that contributed to female criminality. Like their reasons for committing or desisting from committing crime, there are turning point moments for women co-offenders that are also important to note. Multiple life events can follow from an important life experience to create a diverse and dynamic environment where women are driven to commit offences (see Barlow & Weare, 2019: 95).

Policies and research have progressively focused on various ways of how socio-economic conditions and other social limitations affect the paths of women offenders into crime (Batchelor, 2009: 10; Corston, 2007). Research conducted by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation in England (2003: 37) uncovered that drug trafficking is conducted by individuals on the edges of society, those of low financial status; those wanting to enhance their self-esteem on account of past exploitation or abuse as a child or in their youth; and by the individuals who are criminally disposed or show anti-social behaviours. The UNODC (2018: 29) adds that women may become involved in drug trafficking because their male partners are involved in drug trafficking. They may commit crimes in accordance with their male partners or may be incarcerated for taking responsibility for a crime that their partners committed.

According to UNODC (2018: 29), women operate at the lowest level in the drug supply chain hierarchy as “mules”, playing the role of sexual escorts around male dealers, couriers or small-scale dealers. Studies conducted by Fleetwood (2014a: 1) for the Organisation of American States (OAS) and Inter-American Commission of Women, document circumstances where women are compelled to act as drug “mules” through intimidation and violence, by being deceived into trafficking drugs unwittingly, or in effort to help their family members.

For a variety of reasons women can get involved in drug trafficking. As with men, it may be their own decision, although it may be driven by financial factors in conditions where jobs and financial opportunities may be restricted (UNODC, 2018: 29). Artz et al (2012: 1) also stipulate that the number of legal alternatives to which women can access financial resources have been reduced due to the changes in welfare policies and some women see motherhood as an important part of their narratives and commit crimes in order to care for their children.

Research conducted in Barbados at Her Majesty's Female Correctional Centre by Bailey (2013: 117) identified several factors associated with female participation in illegal drug trafficking. These factors include economic gain and poverty, empowerment/status, past victimisation or abuse, childhood experiences, and involvement by deception (Bailey, 2013: 117).

### **2.3.1 Economic gain and poverty**

In an overview of economic crimes involving women, Davies (2003: 290) argues that women "are victims who are being coerced and forced into crime in order to escape from hardship, poverty and abuse". Sumter et al (2016: 7) express that financial hardship results in a greater number of chances for unlawful work than for lawful work. Keeping in mind the objective of improving their financial status, women regularly work in the illegal drug industry as drug mules that are low-level positions that pay very little in contrast with the proceeds collected by drug dealers (Sumter et al, 2016: 7). Campbell (2008: 235) states that women assume roles in drug syndicates as couriers, providers of sustenance and housing, buyers and sellers of drugs, and subsidisers of dependent males. In Mexico, the growth of female drug smuggling is part of women's attempt at economic development and corresponds with the attempts of drug cartels to establish innovative and new ways to prevent police officers, immigration officials, customs and anti-drug agencies from detecting and confiscating the drugs. (Campbell, 2008: 236).

Women in South Africa experience vulnerabilities relating to structural poverty for a number of reasons, including lower educational achievements, lack of basic needs, such as food and shelter, and a higher rate of unemployment (Artz et al, 2012: 101-



102). The percentage of female-headed households may also result in criminal behaviour (Artz et al, 2012: 101-102). Van Heerden (2014: 123) indicates that, in South Africa, most drug mules are identified and recruited because of their emotional, financial or social vulnerabilities. It is therefore important that the fragile economic climate in South Africa be addressed because of social disintegration, unemployment and poverty (refer to Chapter 5 for recommendations). South Africa's unemployment rate increased to 29,1 per cent (n=6,7 million unemployed people) in quarter three (Q3) of 2019; an increase of 78 000 unemployed persons when Q3 is compared to Q2 of the same year. According to the Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) published by Statistics South Africa (StatsSA), this is the highest unemployment rate since StatsSA started measuring unemployment using the QLFS in 2008 (StatsSA, 2019a: 1). The unemployment rate, according to gender, increased from 27,1 per cent to 27,7 per cent in Q2 while it increased for women from 30,9 per cent to 31,3 per cent. Even though statistics for Q3 reflect an increase in the rate of employment for women in 2019, Statistician General, Risenga Maluleke, stated that "women are more vulnerable to unemployment than men ... and are less likely to participate in the labour market" (Mbude, 2018). Molopyane (2019) adds that black women who are not in employment, training or education are most affected because of their high unemployment rate which has secondary implications and makes them the most vulnerable members of society. As a result, the high rate of socio-economic conditions, common lack of credible law enforcement in South Africa and unemployment contribute to the recruitment of more people by organised crime syndicates (Van Heerden, 2014: 123). Fleetwood (2010: 8) found that the majority of the female offenders in her study described supporting their families and financial concerns as their primary motives for engaging in criminal activity.

However, it is important to reiterate that poverty is only one of the risk factors that motivate females' involvement in the trafficking of drugs. This means that poverty by itself does not lead a person to becoming a drug mule but can be regarded as an additional factor.

### **2.3.2 Empowerment/status**

Campbell (2008: 72) indicates that empowerment and status achieved through drug trafficking is one of the contributing factors for being involved in the crime. Furthermore, even though successful trafficking activities can create a large amount of money, which often creates sense of power and self-esteem it may be temporary. Fleetwood (2010: 9) adds that some women involved in drug trafficking achieve status and empowerment as the endeavour provides benefits, such as excitement, a free holiday and traveling abroad.

### **2.3.3 Childhood experiences, past victimisation and abuse**

Geiger (2006: 586) states that several female offenders refer to an upbringing full of with sexual, emotional and/or physical abuse as their involvement in drug trafficking as a way of dealing with the negative life-long effects.

### **2.3.4 Involvement by deception and /or coercion**

On the other hand, Fleetwood (2010: 72) opines that women's involvement in drug trafficking also comes as a result of coercion and deception. According to this author, female offenders are often "manipulated" by their male partners or relatives and are often victimised by threats and coercion into drug trafficking. Involvement by deception is thus another motivating factor of female drug mules. Fleetwood (2010: 72), a researcher from the UK, conducted research at correctional centres in Ecuador, South America, and found that females were unwillingly involved in drug smuggling. In addition, gendered relationships that are characterised by trust enable men or female friends to deceive unknowing mules that were "set up" (Fleetwood, 2010: 74).

Fleetwood (2014a: 78) emphasises that the risk factors that are related to being recruited as a drug mule vary and that no single factor can be regarded as a sole cause for women's involvement in drug trafficking. The risk factors include women who are unemployed, financially disadvantaged, vulnerable and are single mothers. The participants (drug mule recruiters) in her study stated that a number of qualities are looked for in a mule. The women had to be people that recruiters knew of, but

who did not know the recruiter well. This included individuals that the recruiter hoped would increase the likelihood of passing customs, such as the characteristics of a professional drug mule (see sub-section 2.4.1)

## **2.4 PROFILE OF A DRUG MULE**

According to Downden, Bennel and Bloomfield (2007: 44), offender profiling is generally considered "a method to determine an individual's core personality and behavioural traits based on an examination of the crimes committed by him or her". This study seeks to provide an understanding of the profile of a female drug mule by highlighting the typology of a female drug mule, demographic information and offender characteristics based on literature available on this topic.

### **2.4.1 Typology of a female drug mule**

The role of a drug mule can involve buying, storing and transporting drugs from one place to another, locally or internationally, on behalf of others. This position is typically the lowest rank in the drug supply chain and girls or women (and some men) doing these low-paid, secondary and less-qualified jobs (Maher & Hudson, 2007: 805). According to Van de Bunt, Kunst and Siegal (2003: 1), there are mainly two identifiable types of drug mules: the self-employed drug mule or "petty smuggler" and the professional drug mule.

The "petty smuggler" or self-employed drug mule smuggles drugs for personal gain. Petty smugglers use less sophisticated ways of smuggling, such as smuggling drugs in a backpack (Van de Bunt et al, 2003: 1). The second type consists of drug mules who are specifically recruited by drug syndicates and paid a wage to smuggle drugs. According to Van Heerden (2014: 71), this type of drug mule can further be divided into two sub-types: a professional drug mule and a decoy drug mule. Professional drug mules smuggle drugs for a living. They carry drugs of high quality and they do it multiple times throughout their lifetime, and rarely get caught (Van Heerden, 2014: 72). Decoy mules, however, do not complete successful drug transactions, they serve as decoys to detract attention from larger-scale drug smuggling carried out by smuggling professionals at international borders. Law enforcement personnel would be given a tip off by a member of the drug syndicate on an expected drug delivery by

a decoy drug mule. While this person is arrested, another person carrying larger quantities of drugs passes through customs undetected (Van de Bunt et al, 2003: 1; UNODC, 2018: 30). Carey (2014: 56) adds that the role of a drug smuggler and a drug mule differ – the drug smuggler moves goods for his/her own enrichment or benefit, while a drug mule is a vessel for transportation controlled by others.

## **2.4.2 Offender characteristics**

Assembling essential information, such as the demographical information, behavioural characteristics and motive of the offender, builds a foundation and a background of the offender which assists with understanding the kind of the offender under study (Unlu & Ekici, 2012: 302).

### **2.4.2.1 Demographical information**

Turkish researchers, Unlu and Ekici (2012: 302), conducted descriptive research in Istanbul to understand the characteristics of foreign drug mules in order to identify potential ties between demographic factors. Out of 230 drug couriers, 157 were male and 73 were female. The study found that males were the dominant gender among drug mules in Turkey. However, the growth rate of the number of female drug offenders over the last five years has been substantially higher than that of male drug offenders. The average age of the drug mules was 33, while 38,3 per cent of them were 31–40 years old, the majority of them (188 drug mules – males and females) were between 19 and 40 years old. A further critical finding was the substantial difference in gender representation among drug mules from different regions (Unlu & Ekici, 2012: 302). The ratio of female couriers was 37,2 per cent among South Americans, 37 per cent among Africans, and 17 per cent among Asians (Unlu & Ekici, 2012: 302).

In his research, Bailey (2013: 127) interviewed 12 female drug mules incarcerated at Her Majesty's Prison in Barbados and found that only one of the offenders was from Barbados, and the majority were from Jamaica and Guyana. The demographical characteristics were as follows: the offenders were aged between 15 and 35 years, they were raised by single parents, the majority had children and in female-headed homes. Education levels were low with the majority only having completed primary

schooling. Unlu and Ekici (2012: 302) add that 28,7 per cent of the couriers that are incarcerated in Istanbul had clerk-type occupations; 22,6 per cent performed craft and related trades and 10,4 per cent were service workers and shop market sales workers.

Marshall and Moreton (2011: 3) interviewed 12 incarcerated women (mostly foreign) for the Office of the Sentencing Council in England and found that these women were of different ages and different countries and backgrounds. Characteristics are summarised below:

- Their ages ranged from 23 to 52 years, with most interviewees being in their 20s and 30s;
- The following nationalities were represented: Brazilian, Jamaican, St Lucian, Barbadian, Venezuelan, German, Portuguese, North American, South African, British and Bahamian;
- Most of the women were working – either full time or part time – at the time of the offence, covering a variety of jobs, including secretarial work, public sector work, hairdressing, shop work, and childcare;
- At the time of the offence, the women were living in owned or rented types of accommodation – with either family, friends, children or partners. One woman was homeless; and
- Most interviewees had either one or two children, ranging from 11 months to 29 years of age and a few had no children (Marshall & Moreton, 2011: 3).

A South African research project, which consisted of a literature analysis of media articles that were published between 2002 and 2012 regarding incarcerated drug mules, was conducted by Van Heerden (2014: 89). The study concluded that all the offenders were females and their ages ranged from 20 to 40 years, with the highest prevalence of mules being arrested between 30 and 35 years of age and drug mules between the ages of 20 and 30, and above 40, were indicated as the second and third highest age groups arrested (Van Heerden, 2014: 88-90).

#### **2.4.2.2 Behavioural characteristics**

By understanding the context of an airport environment and the behaviour that are

anticipated, behaviours that diverge from the usual can be detected and used to classify individuals who might be involved in criminal activities. One aspect where suspicious behaviour can be used is to help identify people who transport illicit drugs (Meehan, McClay & Strange, 2015: 1).

This section of the study discusses how potential drug mules are or can be identified by law enforcement (not necessarily South African law enforcement) by looking at a potential drug mule's behaviour or characteristics (discussed below). There will be a continuous discussion on the methods used by drug mules to smuggle drugs in subsection 2.5.1 as there is a link between the two themes. The goal is to elaborate on potential drug mule characteristics and the different methods drug mules use to smuggle drugs.

Although this may help in the identification of a drug mule at an airport, not all behaviour indicates that of a drug mule or of wrongdoing. Meehan et al (2015: 5) have identified seven categories of characteristics that assist with identifying unusual behaviour of a drug mule at airports, namely: ticket characteristics, luggage characteristics, general behaviours, deceptive behaviours, nonverbal behaviours and group behaviours.

#### **(i) Ticket characteristics**

According to Meehan et al (2015: 5), behaviours related to ticketing involve the process an individual goes through when buying the ticket and the nature of an individual's travel itinerary. When tickets change regularly, they lead to deviations from standard ticket buying behaviours and travel itineraries. Meehan et al (2015: 5) identify the following ticket characteristic behaviours:

- Unusual reservations: reservations made at unusual hours (such as 03:00am).
- Purchasing tickets through travel agencies that are flagged by law enforcement for connections with drug traffickers.
- Walk-up purchases: buying tickets at the ticket counter at the airport.

- Paying cash: ticket paid with cash, typically USD\$20 bills.
- One-way ticket that indicates that the individual may not know when he/she will return.
- Fake phone numbers: The drug mule may provide false phone numbers, so they cannot be traced.

## **(ii) Luggage characteristics**

The luggage used by a drug mule to transport money or drugs and the way he or she behaves concerning the luggage are discussed below:

- Inappropriate number of bags: In comparison to the duration of the trip there are many bags or too few.
- Tampered bags: The marks on the screws of the bag suggest that the bag may be tampered with or that an individual may have taken the bag apart, possibly to hide something in it.
- Use of masking agents: The bag can radiate a distinct odour that masks the smell of the drugs hidden away. It may involve heavy fragrances, fabric softener sheets or other chemicals that release intense odours (Meehan et al, 2015: 7).

## **(iii) General behaviours**

The behaviour of a drug mule may change at the airport, as a result of the drugs in his/her possession. General behaviours common among drug mules at the airport:

- A courier can travel alone and/or arrive late either because of the unpredictable nature of the drug transfers or to limit exposure to police officials.
- The drug mule can behave in a nervous or abnormal manner when encountering with police officials
- The mule may be on the phone a lot, either obtaining or providing information,

making plans for the transaction and asking / giving directions (Meehan et al, 2015: 8).

#### **(iv) Deceptive behaviours**

According to Meehan et al (2015: 9), when drug mules conceal their true intentions, feelings or actions, they are exhibiting deceptive behaviour in order to avoid detection by law enforcement or airport officials. Drug mules take extra measures to avoid being deemed suspicious and try to fit into the environment. The drug mule may wander around the terminal, instead of remaining in one area. They might stand at another gate to draw away any attention to themselves or avoid eye contact with the people around them or with airline workers.

#### **(v) Nonverbal behaviours**

There are a variety of nonverbal behaviours that come from contact with law enforcement and the stressful environment of an airport that a courier may exhibit. In general, police officials inspect a possible suspect before initial contact, and gathers information to create a pattern for that individual's behaviour.

Meehan et al (2015: 10-12) highlight whether behaviours of a drug mule are likely to take place before or after law enforcement interaction. These behaviours are identified as pre-contact (when an individual is being monitored) or post-contact (during interaction with police officials) (Meehan et al, 2015: 10-12):

- A drug mule might look away during interactions with police officials, in order to avoid eye contact which may be a sign of deception. This occurs pre- and post-contact.
- A courier may constantly turn around while walking to see if no one is following him/her. This may be as a result of situational awareness, paranoia or anxiety. This includes observing people, gazing or taking glimpse of the reflections on windows, mirrors and glistering wall surfaces to be aware of their surroundings. This would occur pre-contact.
- A drug mule can start sweating or shaking in stressful environments which



may result in a rapid rise in anxiety or adrenaline in his/her body. This can be caused by being in close contact or talking to other people or law enforcement officials. This happens post-contact.

#### **(vi) Group behaviours**

A drug mule may not necessarily travel alone (see Meehan et al, 2015: 13). He/she may actively be working with someone else to ensure a smooth delivery of money or drugs. A drug mule can be monitored by another to verify that the mule makes the delivery. Drug mules may work together, as a team; they may not travel together, communicate or acknowledge each other. This is to avoid any arrests when police officials stop or question either of the mules. Outside of personal contact, drug mules that work together may display a variety of traits, such as quickly glancing at their partners, to ensure that they are there or following their partners at a distance, which allows them to communicate covertly and evade detection (Meehan et al, 2015: 13).

## **2.5 THE RECRUITMENT OF WOMEN AS DRUG MULES**

The recruitment of an individual in drug trafficking is done through the internet or through personal contact mostly by individuals they know personally (Martel, 2013: 20). According to Van Heerden (2014: 2), syndicates recruit and use drug mules in drug smuggling operations from South Africa to Brazil and elsewhere. A person located in Brazil contacts a recruiter located in South Africa, who then recruits a person either through a direct approach, indicating that s/he will be smuggling drugs for monetary payment, or an indirect approach, indicating to the potential drug mule that they have a job or vacation opportunity for him/her (Van Heerden, 2014: 2).

Drug mules are also recruited through bogus churches, such as in the case of Nokwazi Memela, a South African drug mule who was lured by her church leaders who were helping her financially. The church leaders promised Memela employment (to import carpets) in Iran. Memela was arrested and imprisoned in Iran in 2008 for drug possession. In a television interview done by Real Talk (2018), Memela highlighted that the pastors of the church enquired about her personal life, background, financial status and relationship status prior to recruiting her. With the information provided, the recruiter is able to initiate an employment opportunity

overseas to unknowingly (in most cases) smuggle drugs. The drug mule is then expected to transport a certain amount of drugs to a location provided by the recruiter. The previously mentioned case study and statement are interlinked with the risk factors of being recruited as a drug mule and the motivating factors that lead women to become drug mules as discussed in section 2.3 of this chapter.

The following discussion focuses on the methods used to smuggle drugs.

### **2.5.1 Methods used by drug mules for drug smuggling**

Drug mules and syndicates who use them have developed many ways to evade interception. According to the EMCDDA (2012: 8), these methods include the following:

- **Strapping the drugs to their bodies**

On the 14<sup>th</sup> of February 2018, a 42-year-old Seychelles national was arrested at ORTIA after being found with drugs strapped to his thighs. The heroin, which was wrapped in a bag and strapped to his body, was estimated to have a street value of R112,000 (*TimesLive*, 2018: 1). The next arrest also followed a tip-off. This time, a 53-year-old woman from Amanzimtoti, who had 1,16 kg of cocaine valued at more than R540 000 strapped to her body, was arrested (Geldenhuys, 2016: 28).

- **Swallowing of drug-filled latex balloons**

The smuggling of illegal drugs through internal bodily concealment was first confirmed in the UK in 1974 (Stewart, Heaton & Hogbin, 1990: 659). Illicit drug packets can be dissimulated in the body through consumption or injection into the vagina or rectum. These individuals are commonly identified as "body packers," "swallowers," "stuffers" or "mules" (Stewart et al, 1990: 659). Drugs such as cannabis, opium and cocaine are smuggled through body concealment (Stewart et al, 1990: 659). Swallowing of drug-filled latex balloons can either be condoms, the fingers of latex gloves, or special drug-filled pellets. In this way, the drugs are carried across borders in the mule's stomach. Although this is a common method, it is medically a highly dangerous way of smuggling small amounts of drugs (Geldenhuys, 2016: 28). Drug mules often go to hospitals when they have

complications, such as an overdose, intestinal obstruction or after arrest by customs officers who seek medical advice on their behalf (Stewart et al, 1990: 659).

- **Luggage concealment**

According to Van Heerden (2014: 118-119), a person carrying drugs on his/her person or in his/her luggage, usually concealed in the lining of the luggage bag or wrapped with clothes or shoes, would simply hand the drugs over at a place arranged by the syndicate, get their payment and leave, or if s/he is a seasoned traveller, would wait for the next instructions.

Hübschle (2014: 40) states that the precise approach used by drug mules to smuggle drugs depends on the type illicit substance that needs to be smuggled. Heroin and cocaine, for example, are often ingested by swallowing. Once the drug mule, who ingested the drugs, arrives at the intended location, he / she is given a laxative or a food item to safely extract the "bullets" (Hübschle, 2014: 40).

## **2.6 MEASURES TO PREVENT AND COMBAT DRUG SMUGGLING**

According to Geldenhuys (2016: 30), the South African government makes an effort to combat and prevent drug smuggling with crime prevention campaigns and visible policing. Drug detection dogs and special scanners are used at airports to detect drugs hidden in baggage or in people's stomachs (as explained above) and to prevent drug mules from smuggling drugs into South Africa. However, only a small amount is detected this way because scanners are largely dependent on human operation, making the method vulnerable to corruption and to errors caused by the individuals operating the scanning machines (Van Heerden, 2014: 26). Drug mules are often re-routed by flying as in-transit passengers into Johannesburg before traveling to other Southern African destinations. The drug mule then exits through border checkpoints that lack the same level of surveillance and security measures as ORTIA (Van Heerden, 2014: 26). As a result, drug mules are able to pass through South African ports without being detected. This makes the measures the state has in place to combat drug trafficking questionable.

Hübschle (2014: 33) writes that mules that are arrested and taken to trial typically

have no information about the drug dealers behind the drug trafficking syndicate, as it is usually local henchmen who recruit them. Detaining a drug mule rarely leads police officials to the kingpin. It is evident that drug mules are mere pawns, immediately replaced by those who are vulnerable. In the arrival and departure halls of airports, large signboards are displayed warning passengers of the risks of drug smuggling and flight tickets have notices written on them about the carrying of restricted goods. Police Units investigating transnational crime, aided by Covert Crime Intelligence Units are deployed at airports for the identification and arrest of drug mules arriving and departing (Van Heerden, 2014: 128).

### **2.6.1 South African legislation**

The Prevention of Organised Crime Act 38 of 1999 introduced measures to combat organised crime, money laundering and other criminal activities. It also amended the Drugs and Drug Trafficking Act 140 of 1992. Contraventions under the Prevention of Organised Crime Act 121 of 1998 provide for syndicates to be arrested and prosecuted as a criminal enterprise. According to the DoJ and CD (1992: 12), the Drugs and Drug Trafficking Act 140 of 1992 provides for:

- the prohibition of the use or possession of, or the dealing in, drugs and of certain acts relating to the manufacture or supply of certain substances or the acquisition or conversion of the proceeds of certain crimes;
- the obligation to report certain information to the police; for the exercise of the powers of entry, search, seizure and detention in specified circumstances; for the recovery of the proceeds of drug trafficking; and
- matters connected therewith.

As depicted in section 5 of the Drugs and Drug Trafficking Act of 1992, the Act is used as a directive to arrest all people caught with or attempting to smuggle drugs across South African borders (DoJ & CD, 1992: 33). The Department of Health (DoH, 1965: 8) stipulates in the Medicines Control Act 101 of 1965 that registration of medicines and related substances intended for human and for animal use is required. To make further provision for the prohibition on the sale of medicines which

are subject to registration and are not registered, the Medicines Control Act 101 of 1965 makes reference to prosecution in relation to the type and amount/quantity of drugs carried by drug couriers. The Criminal Procedures Act 51 of 1977 makes provision for procedures and related matters in criminal proceedings, in terms of prosecution drug trafficking and drug mules (DoJ & CD, 1997: 1; Van Heerden, 2014: 128).

## 2.6.2 Punishment for drug mules

Since 1961, three UN conventions have proposed that the unlawful production of drugs and psychotropic substances be classified as a criminal offence, punishable by penalties including incarceration (EMCDDA, 2017: 4). As mentioned earlier in this chapter, South Africa does not have the latest official statistics on drug mules incarcerated in South African correctional facilities. The Department of Correctional Services (DCS), however, classifies offenders according to five different crime categories, namely, aggressive, economical, narcotics, sexual and other, as stipulated in the table below. These are shown in Table 2.1.

**Table 2.1: Crime categories for female sentenced offenders in South Africa**

<b>CRIME CATEGORIES FOR FEMALE SENTENCED OFFENDERS IN SOUTH AFRICA</b>			
<b>Crime type and category</b>	<b>Number of offenders per financial year</b>		
	<b>2012/13</b>	<b>2013/14</b>	<b>2014/15</b>
Aggressive	946	1029	1067
Economical	932	1066	1208
Narcotics	291	333	382
Sexual	16	22	28
Other	152	181	192

Source: Department of Correctional Services Strategic Plans (DCS, 2015: 19).

As indicated in the table, the number of incarcerated female offenders for narcotics

for the year 2014/15 was 382. It is important to note that the latest statistics were not utilised in this study because the DCS 2015/16 strategic plan is for the period 2015/2016 – 2019/2020 and the DCS had, at the time this research was conducted, not published updated strategic plans. Even though drug smuggling is currently categorised under drug-related crimes (SAPS, 2019a: 1), this created a slight challenge for the researcher regarding finding literature on how long a drug mule is incarcerated when caught in South Africa. It is for this reason that this section mostly focuses on punishment for drug mules as meted out in countries outside of South Africa.

As the conventions were not more in-depth, there is a broad variety of potential punishments for drug smuggling offences within EMCDDA (2017: 4). According to the EMCDDA (2017: 7), several countries do not have a maximum penalty, since different types of drugs are subject to different punishments and are graded as per the risk they are likely to pose to individuals and to the society. There are also various offences and punishments related to the scale of supply activity.

In some countries, the punishment is related to the level of court at which a crime is prosecuted, which is usually linked to the severity of the offence. This is the case in Bulgaria, Ireland, Cyprus, Malta and the UK. In eight countries, the maximum penalty for the basic offence is three years or less in prison. By contrast, in four countries (Ireland, Cyprus, Malta and the UK), life imprisonment is already specified for the basic offences, depending on the type of drug involved or the court in which the case is prosecuted, as mentioned above (EMCDDA, 2017: 7).

Women tend to occupy the high-risk, low-status role of courier. Such “drug mules”, as they have been labelled by the media (Harper, Harper & Stockdale, 2002: 102), when convicted of unlawful importation of cocaine, a class A drug, receive custodial sentences of 11 years, with most of these sentences being eight years or less. The longest sentences were 11 years – and an additional one of 15 years – which may reflect the absence of a guilty plea and the nature of the offence. Countries, such as Thailand, Ireland, Malaysia and Brazil, carry heavy sentences, such as the death sentence, as a result of their no drug policies (Marshall & Moreton, 2011: 5).

According to the EMCDDA (2017: 7), 28 countries in the European Union (EU)

member states incarcerate drug mules based on the following factors: basic offences, minimum penalties and aggravating circumstances.

- **Basic offences:** These are for drug-trafficking crimes where circumstances are not aggravating. The framework decision does not prescribe a particular penalty for fundamental crimes, but rather calls for at least one to three years of punishments. In fact, the provisions of the countries' for maximum penalties for basic offences range from one year to life imprisonment.
- **Minimum penalties:** Minimum penalties are one year or less. They are the lower limits for the determination of the punishment and should be referred to except in the case of extreme circumstances.
- **Aggravating circumstances:** Several countries provide specific conditions that contribute to higher sanctions. Other legal frameworks make allowance for only a few additional aggravating factors that expand the range of punishments. The most commonly found aggravating factors for drug trafficking crimes are the involvement of drugs, which cause the most harm to health; drug trafficking as part of a criminal organisation; the quantity of drugs; and have resulted in serious harm to a number of people's health.

Fleetwood (2015a: 3) adds that often there is no difference between international drug trafficking, street level selling and use when a drug mule is detained. The arrest and severe punishment of drug mules under the banner of deterrence serve as a symbolic function rather than an effective method. However, not all parties agree with the harsh sentences for drug mules. The UNODC recently called for countries to ensure the adoption of proportionate penalties for drug offences. Countries, such as Argentina, Brazil, South Africa and New Zealand, have sections in their drug legislations about proportionality as an essential criterion that sentencing systems should follow in order to assess the extent of penalties according to the nature and the harm caused to others or to society because of those actions (UNODC, 2012: 2).

Fleetwood (2011: 170) is of the opinion that, although there is uncertainty about what can be done to discourage women from being involved as drug mules, evidence indicates that sentencing policies have overwhelmingly punished women. The

significance of women's deprivation or family commitments is largely omitted by mandatory minimum sentences (widely used in the US, Europe and most recently Canada). The largest report on drug mules completed so far (consisting of 322 male and female drug mules) in the UK by Green, Mills and Read (1994: 479) showed that women are more likely to plead “not guilty” but using that defence has led to higher sentences (Fleetwood, 2011: 199).

In South Africa, the Drugs and Drug Trafficking Act 140 of 1992, “prohibits any person from converting property that he or she knows or suspects to be gained from the proceeds of drug trafficking”, and it makes “dealing in dangerous and undesirable drugs an offence punishable by up to 25 years [of] imprisonment” (DoJ & CD, 1992: 12). The maximum sentence for the possession of illegal drugs is 15 years. There are no prescribed minimum sentences for drug offences in this Act (Van Heerden, 2014: 69).

In the South African context, just as in several other countries, there has been an excessive increase in the rates of women being incarcerated for low-level drug dealing offences (UNODC, 2018: 5). It has also been stated that women are generally less likely than men to be able to afford fines or to pay the surety required for bail. Women may also be less conscious of their legal rights and may not be liable for non-custodial penalties and measures if their mental, economic and social vulnerability is seen as risk factors (UNODC, 2018: 32).

As indicated in Chapter One, this study also identifies various criminological theories that can be applied to explain reasons why females become drug mules. This is discussed below.

## **2.7 THEORETICAL EXPLANATION**

Criminological theories are aimed at assisting us get an understanding of crime and criminal justice. Theories include the making and breaking of law, illegal and deviant behaviour, as well as criminal activity patterns. Different theories can either be macro or the micro focused. Theories can be used to direct policy implementation and can be measured on several factors including testability, scope, empirical validity and practical usefulness (Akers & Sellers, 2013: 3). Hagan (2011: 92) states that theories



in criminology are frequently seen as an effort to excuse and justify violence, and/or as being wholly ineffective in directing practical, existing social policies. However, it should not be confused with justifying or defending whether or how things should happen.

It is for the abovementioned reasons that this chapter uses criminological theories to explain why females partake in drug trafficking as drug mules. Furthermore, the information gathered from the theories and the data collected from semi-structured interviews with incarcerated female drug mules, may assist law enforcement to develop preventative measures for drug smuggling and, in turn, assist society to understand the risks of being recruited as a drug mule. The theory underpinning this study is the critical criminology theory, specifically feminist theory (see below). The reason why feminist theories are deemed most suitable for this study is because the primary unit of analysis of this study is women and the feminist theories question whether traditional male-centred theories of crime apply to women (Walsh, 2012: 94). Feminist theories do not focus on the crimes of men as general criminology highly represents crimes committed by men. This study does not discredit other theoretical explanations for committing crimes. However, based on the purpose and the objectives of this study, feminist theories are deemed more suitable to explain the phenomenon of female drug mules.

In order for the above mentioned to be implemented, critical criminology theory in the form of feminist theories applied within six streams are discussed to explain females' pathways to becoming drug mules.

### **2.7.1 Critical criminology**

Critical criminology is a diverse field of criminological theory and research. However, the term 'critical criminology' only began to appear in the 1970s, research existed in this field for over a century (Long, 2015: 1). Critical criminology is research that questions conventional criminology on deviance, crime and law. The thread linking together vital strategies is the notion that inequality impacts criminality. Although social disparities are still regarded as important by various critical scholars, inequality based on race and gender are also gaining attention (Long, 2015: 2). Critical

criminology argues that the working-class crime is insignificant when compared to “crimes of the powerful” such as white-collar crime or environment pollution that largely go unpunished where the perpetrators can employ accountants and attorneys to defend them and have influential associations who can advocate for them (Vold, Bernard & Snipes, 1998: 177).

Burke (2003: 173) views critical criminology as a perspective where crime is defined in terms of the concept of inequality where some groups in society – the working class (especially the socially disadvantaged areas), women (especially, those who are single parents, socially isolated and poor) and ethnic groups (such as indigenous groups) – are perceived to be more likely to be more affected by unequal social relations based on racism, class discrimination and sexism.

#### **2.7.1.1 Feminist theories**

Criminology as a discipline has focused almost solely on crimes where the majority of scientific research only use data on male offenders. Theories were formed to justify why boys and men violated the law (Cullen & Agnew, 2006: 347). Historically, female crime has been seen as tangential to the issue of crime, as not really worth researching, and as having no consequences for the perception of male illegibility. A more significant explanation for not considering gender in criminal research was that criminologists were almost all men: men were studying and wrote about men (Cullen & Agnew, 2006: 347). Part of the disregard of women resulted from the unequal involvement of males in crime, especially serious crimes, and the overwhelming maleness of the correctional population (Cullen & Agnew, 2006: 347). (Cullen & Agnew, 2006: 347). Feminist theory includes a structure within the ambit of critical criminology that takes into account the particular social role and life experiences of women (Van Gundy, 2014: 1). Feminist theories are based on the belief that in today's society women are structurally marginalised and that crime against or involving women is viewed to be the product of social inequality and economic reliance on men or the state welfare system (White, Haines & Asquith, 2017: 137). Van Gundy (2014: 15) argues that within the CJS there is a double standard of power and morality with regards to women. Men and women are treated differently on the basis of gender stereotypes which often lead to unequal and unjust treatment

of women who present themselves before the system as victims or offenders. White et al (2017: 138) suggest that, in order to prevent crimes against or committed by women, there needs to be social empowerment of women. Women need to be provided with greater economic, social and political equality and to confront the negative and restricting nature of male domination.

Although the feminist theory is a broad perspective, it generalises a system of ideas about society, social life and humanity that was developed from the standpoint of women (Lengermann & Niebrugge-Brantley, 2000: 443). Cote (2002: 230) states that the feminist theory opposes existing criminological theories because feminists view them as primarily focused on global patriarchal perceptions which take for granted and neglects the voices of women. The primary focus on the feminist theory is the interpretation of female criminality from a feminist perspective, allows for evolutionary advancements within the economic, social, and political realm of women and has resulted in legislation that advances the rights of women in particular nations (Cote, 2002: 230).

Women's liberation to crime has led to interpretations that are linked with the *economic marginalisation hypothesis*. This perspective highlights the degree to which males control female labour and sexuality (Walsh, 2012: 102). Hunnicutt and Broidy (2004: 130) add that most female crimes are related to economic need, and that the levels of poverty and crime among women have risen. According to this hypothesis, the decrease in male regard for women has contributed to a significant rise in out-of-wedlock births and divorce (Hunnicutt & Broidy, 2004: 130). These factors led to households headed by women and the "feminisation of poverty," which led many women to commit economically related crimes such as drug trafficking, shoplifting and prostitution in order to support themselves (Reckdenwald & Parker, 2008: 5).

The manner in which women are viewed by the CJS as victims and perpetrators is defined in terms of the sexualisation thesis which refers to the premise that, when the CJS and its agents deal with women (in whichever capacity), they do so on the basis of certain gender criteria. (White et al, 2017: 137). Van Gundy (2014: 5) highlights the criticism of the feminist theory and states that, with every controversial

theory, criticism will emerge. One significant critique of the feminist theory involves the definitions, components and understanding of the theory itself (Van Gundy, 2014: 5). Another critique of feminist theory is that it comes in a multitude of forms (as highlighted in the sub-sections that follow) which can be deemed as a benefit but also results in scattered research and a lack of uniformity in scientific understanding. Another area that is generating more attention, as stipulated by White and Haines (2008: 124), is that the feminist theory needs to provide more than a women-centred analysis. It needs to inherit a non-sexist criminology that focuses on gender-relations in their entirety. Criticism provides an important point for theoretical advancements which can allow for a better understanding of women and advances the status of women globally (Van Gundy, 2014: 8).

The interpretation of feminist criminology has led scholars to dissect the extent of feminist theory into six forms of feminist theories, namely, liberal feminist, Marxist feminism, radical feminist, postmodern feminist and social feminist (Van Gundy, 2014: 2) which are discussed below.

#### **2.7.1.1.1 *Liberal feminist***

Giddens (2001) defines liberal feminist theory as a “theory that believes that gender inequality is generated by reducing exposure to the availability of social resources such as employment and education as well as civil rights for women and girls. Liberal feminism centres on gender discrimination as an issue of fair opportunities for men and women. It emphasises on women’s issues, equal treatment and development on the roles women play in society (Cote, 2002: 232). Tibbetts and Hemmens (2015: 364) add that the disparities between males and females in offending is due to the absence of educational and job opportunities for females and that if more females are given these opportunities, they would emulate males in terms of offending. Liberal feminism, according to Nienaber and Moraka (2016: 145), maintains that disparities between men and women are not based on genetics, which basically reflects differences in reproduction. Therefore, women should have the same rights as men, including equal opportunities for education and employment (Nienaber & Moraka, 2016: 145).

There are two major ideologies in liberal feminism, namely, classical liberals and welfare liberals (Enyew & Mihrete, 2018: 62). The classical liberals argue that the task of the state should be to uphold civil rights, provide everyone with equal opportunity and freedom to access the free market; while welfare liberals argue that the state should intervene in making changes to make the playing field fair for everyone and provide basic requirements, including food stamps, legal services, low cost housing and school loans for socially disadvantaged citizens (Enyew & Mihrete, 2018: 62). Unfortunately, liberal feminism cannot eradicate the prevalent notion that women and men are fundamentally distinct, but to some extent, it can prove that while women differ from men, they are not inferior. (Nienaber & Moraka, 2016: 146). Based on the above, the approach proposed by liberal feminists to ensure gender equality progressively eliminates stereotypes, biases as well as traditional and other practices that promote sexism between men and women (Enyew & Mihrete, 2018: 63).

#### **2.7.1.1.2 Marxist feminist**

Marxism is a political and economic system coined by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (White et al, 2017: 123). The focus of the Marxist theory is to highlight the inequalities of a class society (such as health and poverty, business profits and low wages), and to show how these have an impact on the criminalisation process (White et al, 2017: 123). Marx and Engels view the powerful as those who design the laws in their own interests with the privilege of capacity to defend themselves individually if they break the law (Akers & Sellers, 2013: 224). The Marxist theory locates the origin of women's oppression not in individual opportunity but as inherited within a society's political and economic organisation and structure (Van Gundy, 2014: 2). Marxist feminism acknowledges the patriarchal system and gender relations within that structure. It is also aware that the underlying cause male dominance is that men control and own the means of economic production. As a result, women in economically weak roles are often taken advantage of (Cote, 2002: 232). White et al (2017: 123) also adds that the less powerful in society (i.e., females) are compelled to commit crime by economic need and social alienation which makes the powerless targets of the law and the CJS.

White et al (2017: 118) stipulates that the cause of crime is found in the structure of unequal classes in society as a result of inequality, economic exploitation by the capitalists and that the social environment (class structure) of an individual will influence the kinds of criminal activity an individual engages in. According to Tibbetts and Hemmens (2015: 360), people from the lower class are arrested and charged with crimes at an alarming rate. The Marxist theory emphasises the effects of a capitalist society on how the CJS is administered where society is divided by money and power (Tibbetts & Hemmens, 2015: 360). According to White et al (2017: 118), Marxist criminology draws attention away from the emphasis of “working class crimes” or “street crimes” towards the social harms performed by the powerful and socially advantaged within society. This theory reveals how class is related to various forms of criminality (White et al, 2017: 118). The Marxist view is that there should be a broad distinction between the crimes of the powerful and those of the less powerful (Peace & Snider, 1992):

- Crimes committed by privileged or powerful individuals usually have an advantage in capitalist economic competition in relation to personal desires to increase their wealth and social needs (Peace & Snider, 1992; White et al, 2017: 118).
- Crimes that are committed by the less privileged derive from a range of financial and social motives. Crimes committed by the “powerless” are related to efforts to increase or supplement their income relative to survival levels. In other instances, “powerless” people may represent antisocial behaviour that is connected to various types of sociocultural exclusion (Morgan, 2007: 56; White et al, 2017: 118).

Willem Bonger, a theorist who applied Marxist political and economic theory emphasised the link between the economy and crime but did not acknowledge that being socially disadvantaged may lead to criminality (Tibbetts & Hemmens, 2015: 360). His perspective was that crime came about because the contemporary economic and capitalist structure promoted a system based on selfishness and greed, and capitalism caused a difference in the way individuals felt about the society and their place in it (Tibbetts & Hemmens, 2015: 360).

While there may be areas of agreement in the Marxist theory, other criminologists have criticised the theory stating that the Marxist theory underestimates the real harm caused by “rebels” and that those who are victims of antisocial behaviour (often poor themselves) suffer hardships by those who commit “street crimes” (Sparks, 1980 cited in White et al, 2017: 129). Akers and Sellers (2013: 224) add that a critique of the Marxist theory is that cannot be tested by examining primarily capitalist systems because it focuses on the inherent contradictions of capitalist society as a source of criminal justice, crime and law.

The Marxist theory emphasises how the law is the tool by which the ruling class in a country controls the lower class and keeps it in a disadvantaged position (Tibbetts & Hemmens, 2015: 360).

#### **2.7.1.1.3 Radical feminist**

Radical feminists focus on gender, structural oppression, societal disorganisation, significant contribution that women have on society, visible and hidden forms of violence against women, and aspects of social and psychoanalytical concepts (Van Gundy, 2014: 2-3). Radical feminists view gender inequality and the subordination of women to men as a systemic issue of patriarchy (Cote, 2002: 232). Tibbetts and Hemmens (2015: 364) emphasise that numerous societies are based on a structure of patriarchy in which males dominate virtually every aspect of society, including politics, family structures as well as the economy. Samkange (2015: 1173) adds that such patriarchy has been embraced as norm by society and it is the theories perception that this kind of supremacy can be challenged and modified. As per Gandari, Chaminuka and Mafumbate (2012), radical feminism work to create alternative social institutions which meet their needs, at the same time giving women the free will to make decisions on health and social issues that affect them and resisting patriarchal pressures.

#### **2.7.1.1.4 Postmodern feminist**

Postmodern theory is another aspect of feminism that refers to a way of thinking which threatens to overturn the essential premises of modern thought within which the natural and physical sciences have emerged (Cote, 2002: 233). Postmodern

feminism emphasises how gender is perceived in terms of victimising and offending women and therefore affects and reconstructs ways in which the discourses of violence affect women (White et al, 2017: 139). Tibbetts and Hemmens (2015: 365) add that the postmodern feminist theory asserts that gender and sex are socially constructed as derivatives of language. Gender categorisation and ideals are labelled and established by society. Postmodern theory believes that the perception of gender as the centre of focus should consider categories that neglect or marginalise one gender in relation to another (Van Gundy, 2014: 3). Language is seen as a crucial variable between social relations and institutions, and all forms of understanding the social world (White et al, 2017: 236). Crime is defined in terms of the linguistic production and power relations that shape the essence of this theory (DeKeseredy, 2011). Thus, the key to social transformation therefore lies in analysing the language that constructs social relationships in a particular way, to the advantage of some and to the disadvantage of others (DeKeseredy, 2011). According to White et al (2017: 237), while both postmodern and critical criminology share a common concern for the definition of crime, critical criminology is concerned with the “powerless”, while postmodern approaches are concerned with how the “powerless” are constituted by language, and how they resist that label.

Other feminists reject postmodernism, claiming that feminism should be seen as a modernist project adhering to standards of scientific objectivity (Vold et al, 1998: 280). Vold et al (1998: 280) substantiate that whether or not feminists adhere to postmodernism as a whole, a large number of feminists now take an “appreciative relativism” stance within feminism that is similar to postmodernism which means that they recognise and appreciate many different feminist voices. In addition to the abovementioned, Cote (2002: 233) stipulates that the postmodern criminology theory has a focus on how discourse is used to set particular women apart from the rest of the criminals. The theory has also tackled the issue of how men and women’s bodies have been constructed and constituted (socially) (Cote 2002: 233). Smart (1995: 46) states,

“rather than avoiding the issues of gender in relation to power by excluding one from the other in our minds, we need to examine the social mechanism, including language and conceptual frameworks that unite the two together in our society”.



### **2.7.1.1.5 Socialist feminist**

Socialist-based feminist theories focus on gender and class. They view gender and class as equally important, unlike the Marxist theory, which makes class the most important variable (Van Gundy, 2014: 3). The framework of the socialist theory incorporates concepts from radical and Marxist feminism to focus on the exploitation of women found in the capitalist economy (Cote, 2002: 232). This theory emphasises women taking control of their own bodies and reproductive roles to regulate their criminality (Tibbetts & Hemmens, 2015: 364). Although the latter is not entirely clear on how females taking charge of their reproductive destinies can reduce or increase crime rates, data indicates that females who frequently reproduce, especially in poor, urban environments, appear to offend more frequently than other females, suggesting that other factors mediate these effects (Tibbetts & Hemmens, 2015: 364).

Van Gundy (2014:4) notes that every aspect of feminist theory presents women with a unique perspective of their social status, economic empowerment, barriers to oppression (sexism, racism and classism), and life experiences (Van Gundy, 2014: 4). A feminist theoretical approach was implemented in this study because it contrasts existing criminological theories that neglect women's voices. The feminist framework allowed for a theoretical-based focus on gender differences, gender inequality, gender oppression, and structural oppression. Feminist criminology explains female criminality from a feminist perspective which allows ways in which women can be developed and advanced within their social, political and economic environments.

## **2.8 SUMMARY**

This chapter provides an overview on the relevant literature regarding female drug mules. Firstly, drug trafficking by female drug mules in the context of transnational organised crime was discussed, which provided more clarity on the phenomenon. It can be concluded from the literature that social and economic structures are the driving forces behind the motives of drug mules. Secondly, the profile of a drug mule was also identified by incorporating offender characteristics, demographical information and behaviour characteristics at airports. Thirdly, the recruitment process

used by drug trafficking syndicates to recruit women as drug mules and the preventative measures used internationally and in South Africa for drug smuggling were discussed in detail. Lastly, an overview of a critical criminological theory demonstrative of the feminist theory was explained. Chapter 3 provides a detailed description of the research methodology and research design used in this study.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

According to Mafuwane (2011: 67), two concepts, namely, research design and research methodology, need to be clarified in order to clear the confusion that is often associated with their usage. Rajasekar, Philominathan and Chinnathambi (2006: 1) identify research methodology as a systematic way to resolve a problem. It is a method of studying how research is to be conducted. Research methodology is also a procedure by which researchers work to identify and explain a phenomena. It is also described as a study of methods where knowledge is acquired. The goal is to plan how the study will be undertaken (Rajasekar et al, 2006: 1). Van Wyk (2012: 9) states that a research design predicts the kind of methods used to collect and analyse this data, how a research question can be addressed and the kind of data that is required. Creswell (2014: 12) adds that the main purpose of the research design is to provide guidance on how to make competent and impartial research decisions in the research study so that accurate results are obtained. A narrative of the research methodology, sampling methods, data collection and interview process will be discussed. In addition, the research ethics, validity and reliability and proposed data analysis and interpretation will be featured.

#### **3.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Research methodology involves strategies, procedures and measures ranging from data collection methods to data analysis and interpretation methods (Creswell & Creswell, 2018: 3). According to Tashakkori and Creswell (2007: 161), methodologies identify and explain the various problems that need to be studied; what makes a researchable problem; testable hypotheses; how to interpret a problem in a way that it can be examined using different designs and processes; and how to choose and establish appropriate data collection methods. The use of a research approach often depends on the essence of the research problem or topic that will be discussed, the personal experiences of the researchers and the readers of the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018: 3).

The two basic types of research approaches are qualitative and quantitative research. The researcher applied a qualitative approach for the purpose of this study, which is explained below.

### **3.2.1 Qualitative research approach**

Flick (2014: 542) defines qualitative research as

“research aimed at evaluating subjective context or the social production of problems, occurrences or practices by gathering non-standardised data and examining text and pictures rather than numbers and statistics.”

This description stresses how individuals understand a phenomenon in the world. Dantzker and Hunter (2000: 75) define qualitative research as the non-numerical analysis and interpretation of observation to discover underlying meanings and patterns of relationships. The goal of qualitative research is to generate a detailed interpretation of valuable, contextual, informative data (Babbie & Mouton, 2007: 4). Qualitative research is more of an art than a science. It allows the readers to explore the impact and social relevance of the findings (Mandal, 2018: 594). Qualitative research provides insights that extend the understanding of the phenomenon, and it provides possibilities for meaningful judgments regarding social action (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001: 393).

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005: 10), qualitative researchers emphasise the socially constructed nature of reality; the situational constraints that shape inquiry; and the researcher's close relationship with what is being studied. Such researchers underline the value-laden nature of inquiry. They seek answers to questions that focus on how social experience are created and given meaning. A qualitative form of inquiry is considered to be as much a viewpoint on how to approach investigating a research problem as it is a method (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005: 10). Qualitative research is often used to establish hypotheses when there are incomplete or insufficient theories for certain populations and samples or when current theories do not sufficiently address the complexity of the problem that is being studied (Creswell, 2013: 48).

The following benefits of qualitative research, as identified by Kennedy and

Montgomery (2018: 25), are applicable in the current study:

- Qualitative research is sufficient for cases or phenomena where thorough understanding is needed.
- Qualitative research provides rich and in-depth data.
- The perceptions of participants can be thoroughly taken into account through qualitative research.
- Events can be seen in their proper context and more holistically.
- Qualitative research is useful to simplify and maintain data without compromising quality and detail.

According to Maxfield and Babbie (2012: 211) and Wincup (2017: 52), qualitative research is an effective approach to use when researching offenders in a field of study and with marginalised groups such as women. The qualitative research approach assisted the researcher in obtaining rich and detailed data about the causes or contributory factors and the motives considered to be the main drivers behind females' involvement in smuggling drugs (Copes & Miller, 2015: 208).

Mandal (2018: 594) adds that qualitative research may also be evaluated based on the following criteria:

**Clarity:** It needs to be seen whether the research makes sense. It also needs to be checked whether the research is systematically worked, and whether it is described thoroughly, coherently, and clearly.

**Credibility:** Credibility ensures that the respondents selected to take part in the study are true representatives that can reliably shed light on the phenomenon. Credibility also depends on how well the findings suit the facts and are convincing. The researcher will provide rational arguments and detailed reviews that are subject to external auditing. The researcher's interpretations must be rational, reasonable and justifiable. The readers should be able to follow the researchers' conclusions although the readers may disagree with the findings.

**Communication:** The research findings need to be communicated in a manner that ignites interest in the reader. Readers should be able to connect their own perceptions and interpretations with the findings of the study.

**Contribution:** The research needs to add to the existing knowledge in the field of qualitative research. The research findings should address some aspects of human social life. It needs to enrich the understanding of human living conditions. The research should be able to act as a guide for future actions and provide a direction on which future research can be based (Mandal, 2018: 594).

Other distinguishing features of qualitative research refer to knowledge, versatility and the variety of questions/issues that are answered, including sensitive subjects and hard-to-reach segments of the population. For example, it is important to have the required skill set to distinguish contextual influences and possible bias perspectives that can distort meaning (Roller, 2018: 2).

Dantzker, Hunger and Quinn (2018: 61) caution researchers that insight gained by the use of qualitative research is influential in criminal justice and criminology. The authors emphasise that the information gained from the participants in their research add contributions to the field of criminology with new knowledge about female pathways to crime (see Dantzker et al, 2018: 61).

As far as the current study is concerned, a qualitative research approach was implemented to gain first-hand knowledge regarding drug mules incarcerated at Gauteng Female Correctional Centres (Kgoši Mampuru II and Johannesburg). In this study, interviewing was used to explore the experiences of every female's involvement in drug smuggling (see section 3.5 on data collection). The qualitative research approach was implemented and deemed suitable for this research as it allowed the researcher to receive detailed descriptions of the participants' feelings, opinions and experiences, and to interpret the meanings thereof. Data collection is discussed in more details under section 3.5.

The goal of this research, as discussed in the next sub-section, would not have been met through a quantitative research method as it places emphasis on quantification of data. The quantitative research method investigates the answers to the questions

such as: how many, how much, to what extent (Bryman, 2012: 35). In addition, the quantitative research approach cannot describe how social reality is influenced and sustained, or how people perceive their behaviour and those of others (Rahman, 2017: 106). It overlooks the experiences and viewpoints of the respondents in highly structured environments, as there is no direct link between researchers and respondents when data is collected (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen & Walker, 2013: 285). On the contrary, data collection through the use of a qualitative research method requires the researcher to interact with the participants directly while data collection through interviews results in more detailed data collection (Rahman, 2017: 104).

Qualitative research has its disadvantages, such as a smaller sample size, raising the issue of generalising results to the entire research population (Harry & Lipsky, 2014: 445; Thomson, 2011: 45). However, the goal of this study was to explore and gain an in-depth understanding of the topic at hand. As a result, findings are only applicable to the sample, therefore, they cannot be generalised to a larger group of female drug mules. Nonetheless, Carlsson, Blanqvist and Jormfeldt (2017: 330) posit that a limited qualitative sample, as in the case of this study, is advantageous in that focus can be provided to each respondent in order to achieve an in-depth detailed information.

Qualitative research is primarily exploratory (refer to section 3.2.1) with the objective to gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions and motivations, and to reveal the meaning of the processes and relations of social life. However, research is also guided by existing theories and literature, and findings should inform these existing theories and bodies of literature (DeFranzo, 2011: 1; also refer to Chapter Two).

### **3.2.2 Research goal**

According to Maxfield and Babbie (2008: 18), criminal justice research serves many objectives which include, explaining, analysing, describing and implementing. Any other studies may have more than one of these objectives. However, this study was exploratory in nature.

### 3.2.2.1 Exploratory research

The primary goals of this study were to *explore* the phenomenon of female drug mules and to gain in-depth insight on the topic. Exploratory research is used to explore phenomena that are under researched, and to distinguish significant variables. Additionally, the intention of exploratory research is to establish initial insights into the phenomenon by providing guidance for further research on the phenomenon (Babbie, 2010: 92; Maxfield & Babbie, 2008: 19). The focus of exploratory research is to gain a detailed understanding of a new or unusual problem (Babbie, 2010: 92; Maxfield & Babbie, 2008: 19). Exploratory research seeks to find out how people get along in the environment in question; what significance they offer to their actions; and what factors concern them. The aim is to address the question, "what's happening on here?" and to explore social phenomena with no expectations. The aim is correlated with the use of techniques that collect vast quantities of relatively unstructured information (Bachman & Schutt, 2017: 10). According to Barkhuizen (2004: 104), exploratory studies serve as a means of fulfilling the interest and aspiration of the researcher for a thorough knowledge of the phenomenon. It also functions as a trial study to assess the feasibility of future research and to create techniques to do so.

Because it is highly flexible and lacks a precise framework, the primary objective of exploratory research is to establish the limits of the environment within which the obstacles, opportunities or situations of interest are likely to exist. Another objective is to establish the relevant factors or variables that are significant to the research (Van Wyk, 2012: 8). Exploratory research is the most appropriate study design for those projects that address a topic with elevated rates of uncertainty and ignorance and where the issue is not well understood (i.e., very little current research on the topic). In South Africa, little is known about the context of drug smuggling, particularly female drug mules, hence explorative research was implemented in this study.

This study explored and identified the reasons provided by the participants for partaking in drug smuggling. Moreover, it used critical criminological theories to *explain* why females are used as drug mules (refer to section 2.7).



### **3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN**

Durrheim (2004: 29) defines research design as a conceptual framework that operates as a bridge between research questions and the execution or application of the research strategy. Monette, Sullivan and DeJong (2008: 9) explain that a research design provides an outline of how the research will be conducted (i.e., one-on-one interviews, site observations and case docket analysis). The research design often reflects the objective of the study, the key types of which include evaluation, description, prediction, history, exploration and explanation (Van Wyk, 2012: 9). Kumar (2005: 91) classifies research design as the approaches that can be used to resolve research issues. A successful research design provides a clear summary of the proposed procedures with specificity that the same steps can be easily followed and performed by another researcher (Kumar, 2005: 195). In this study, the case study and phenomenological research designs which are explained in the proceeding sections were utilised.

#### **3.3.1 The case study research design**

For this study, the researcher utilised the case study design. Thomas (2016: 10) defines a case study as an in-depth exploration from various perspectives (i.e., document analysis, observations and interviews) that relate to the complexity of the phenomenon being investigated. A case study design focuses on going into the field and collecting information through one-on-one interviewing, site observation checklists and case docket analysis (Welman, Kruger & Mitchell, 2005: 193). It also examines relationships between individuals or within groups to understand the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem and to determine attitudes that are expressed as patterns, roles and language (Welman et al, 2005: 193). Case studies also articulate which data is required, what methods will be used to collect and analyse the data, and how the data is going to answer the research questions and achieve the research goals and objectives (Creswell, 2007: 74).

Rule and Vaughn (2011: 1) add that case studies provide deeper knowledge of a phenomenon, the individual and the circumstances. However, Bailey (2010: 104) indicates that the primary goal of case study design is to conduct a detailed analysis

of the subject matter and not to generalise findings.

### **3.3.2 Phenomenology**

Phenomenology aims at achieving a thorough understanding of the nature of the meaning of everyday experiences (Holloway, 2005: 47). It aims to explain the experiences (phenomena) lived by an individual and to enhance experiences by interpreting their meaning (Holloway, 2005: 47). Qualitative phenomenology is employed to clarify the nature of the human being, to increase understanding of a certain phenomenon, to encourage human responsibility in constructing realities and to reinforce the connection between experiences and the concepts and theories used to explain those experiences (Speziale & Carpenter, 2003: 48).

Constitutive phenomenology includes researching phenomena as it becomes formed or represented in the consciousness of individuals. According to Speziale and Carpenter (2003: 53), constitutive phenomenology refers to the phase where the phenomena unfold in the consciousness of people as they evolve from the first perception to a complete image of the system.

According to Qutoshi (2018: 220), the purpose of conducting phenomenological research is to carefully analyse the phenomenon of the research and to examine the dynamic nature of lived experiences from perspectives of those who live in it. In doing so, the researcher is able to understand the phenomenon, or the case being analysed at a broader level of consciousness but also acknowledges his/her own nature and introduces transition on a personal level (Qutoshi, 2018: 220). Through a process of bracketing and reflexivity, the researcher can thus reflect objectively and become more reflective and attentive in understanding social practices (Qutoshi, 2018: 220).

Bracketing refers to a method of retaining presuppositions and assumptions in suspension to improve the precision of the research (Holloway, 2005: 289). Leedy and Ormrod (2013: 146) add that bracketing is when the researcher sets aside his/her views about the phenomenon in the study. This suggests that researchers are testing their own beliefs and preconceptions in order to set them aside, rather than suppress them, so that they do not conflict with the participants' information.

Throughout the research process, the bracketing process is crucial, particularly during data analysis. Bracketing enables the researcher to remain impartial towards believing or disbelieving the nature of the phenomenon (Speziale & Carpenter, 2003: 55). According to Creswell (2013: 47), when researchers practice reflexivity, they “position themselves” in a qualitative research study. This means that researchers convey their backgrounds (e.g., work experiences, cultural experiences and history), how it informs their interpretation of the information in a study and what they have to gain from the study. Reflexivity is further defined by Patnaik (2013: 100) as a process of self-critique by the researcher to examine how his/her own experiences might or might not have influenced the research process (see sub section 3.5.2).

The phenomenological research approach was appropriate to the goal of the study, which was to *explore* and understand the phenomenon of female drug mules. The phenomenological approach allowed participants, through in-depth interviews (see sub-section 3.5.1), to elicit their own meaning of their experience of being a drug mule. Therefore, the use of a case study and phenomenology as research designs allowed for experiences to be extracted from the participants to maintain the richness of the data.

### **3.4 SAMPLING**

Whitehead and Whitehead (2016: 112) state that the primary aim of sampling is to identify suitable participants to enable sufficient research into the study's focus. As with all forms of research, effective sample collection is a crucial part of the research design phase. Strydom (2011: 224) defines a sample as a collection of measurements from the population of interest. The sample size will depend on what the researcher wants to know, the intent of the research, the risks, what will be beneficial, what will have value and what can be achieved with the time and resources available. (Denscombe, 2010: 141). Furthermore, the sample size criteria in qualitative studies are neither numeric nor systematic. Rather, they include making a range of decisions, not only regarding the number of individuals that will be included in the study and how to identify those individuals, but also about the criteria under which this selection should take place (Omona, 2013: 174), in order to achieve the saturation of data collected. Data saturation is reached when there is enough

information to replicate the study and when there is little possibility of obtaining additional new information (Fusch & Ness, 2015: 1408).

### **3.4.1 Sampling design and size**

In qualitative research, a smaller sample is used to acquire information that is useful for understanding the nature, depth, variability, or meaning surrounding a phenomenon. Quantitative research, by comparison, requires large enough sample sizes to provide statistically accurate quantitative results to represent populations (Gentles, Charles, Ploeg & McKibbin, 2015: 1782).

Research distinguishes between probability sampling and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling is centered on randomisation, whereas non-probability sampling is without randomisation (Schmidt & Brown, 2019: 295). The researcher opted for non-probability sampling because the likelihood of selecting all individuals in the population was low (Strydom, 2011: 231). The researcher ought to use the sample as an explorative and narrative voice of female drug mules as it is happening in society today. Discussed below are the different sampling methods that were implemented in this study. Purposive sampling as well as snowball sampling were utilised. The sample eventually comprised 20 female offenders from two correctional centres in Gauteng, namely, Kgoši Mampuru II (n=10) and Johannesburg (n=10). Due to the fact that this was a qualitative study which aimed at collecting in-depth information from the participants, the sample size was deemed suitable. The sample size was furthermore dependent on the saturation of data where no new information or themes emerged from the interviews (as explained in the previous section). In addition, the sampling size for this study was determined by the availability and willingness of the identified offenders to take part in the study.

#### **3.4.1.1 Purposive sampling**

The purposive sampling technique, also known as judgment sampling, is a researcher's intentional decision as a result of the characteristics that the participant has. It is a non-random method and does not need a fixed number of respondents or underlying theories (Etikan, Abubakar & Alkassim, 2016: 2). According to Oppong (2013: 1), the researcher decides what needs to be known and aims to find

participants who can and are willing to provide the information based on experience and knowledge. In qualitative research, purposive sampling is typically used to define and select the information for the best use of accessible resources (Oppong, 2013: 1). This includes identifying and selecting groups of individuals who are well informed on the phenomenon.

In this research, the researcher was purposive in selecting participants based on specific criteria, which best suited the study. The population from which the sample was drawn comprised female offenders sentenced for dealing in drugs, particularly drug smuggling. After the DCS provided the researcher with the list of offenders that were sentenced and categorised as dealing in drugs, the researcher, with the assistance of a correctional official, filtered the list to ensure that the identified offenders were specifically convicted for being drug mules.

#### **3.4.1.2 Snowball sampling**

Snowball sampling entails researching a particular case involving the phenomenon under investigation to obtain data or more knowledge regarding other similar individuals. One individual refers the researcher to a similar case and potentially more cases (De Vos et al, 2011: 233). The snowball sampling method is useful in situations where the population is hard to reach, displays some kind of social stigma or unlawful behaviour, or other characteristics that makes them atypical and/or socially marginalised (as the cases in this study) (Mujere, 2016: 117). There are two steps to generate a snowball sample: (a) initial units to discover additional units until the sample size is fulfilled; and (b) attempting to distinguish one or more units in the required population (Mujere, 2016: 117). During the snowball process, participants who were initially selected from the list were requested to refer other offenders who committed the same type of crime.

#### **3.4.2 Unit of analysis**

Rubin and Babbie (2008: 138) identify various kinds of units of analysis, which they define as “people or things whose qualities are observed, described and explained by social researchers”. These include individuals, groups (including families and organisations) and social artefacts. The selection of the unit of analysis happens

almost automatically at the problem identification stage therefore, in most research projects, the unit of analysis is relatively clear (De Vos et al, 2011: 93).

In this study, the unit of analysis comprised 20 women who were incarcerated in Johannesburg (n=10) and Kgoši Mampuru II (n=10) female correctional centres for dealing in drugs, particularly drug smuggling. Only convicted offenders took part in the study as interviewing awaiting trial detainees would have infringed on their innocent until proven guilty right.

### **3.4.3 Geographical delineation**

The primary goal of the study was to *explore* an under researched topic (see subsection 3.2.1.1) therefore, the research was limited to female correctional centres in the Gauteng Province of South Africa as well as ORTIA, which is a focal point in drug trafficking in South Africa, situated in Gauteng. The limitation to conduct the research only in Gauteng was based on convenience because the researcher resides in Johannesburg. Additionally, according to the Parliamentary Monitoring Group (PMG, 2013: 2) Annual Report of 2014/2015, within the eight correctional centre management areas in South Africa, Gauteng has two correctional centres for women, Johannesburg and Kgoši Mampuru II. The Johannesburg Correctional Centre has an official capacity of 605 female offenders and Kgoši Mampuru II has a capacity of 89 female offenders (PMG, 2013: 2). According to the DCS Annual Report for the financial year 2017/2018, Gauteng has the highest number of sentenced female offenders in South Africa with a capacity of 919 women (DCS, 2018: 28). Therefore, this was one of the reasons the researcher chose to base the research in Gauteng only. Additionally, the researcher did not have sufficient funds to extend the study to the other eight provinces of the country.

## **3.5 DATA COLLECTION**

This section comprises methods used when data were collected. Qualitative data collection entails gathering data on a phenomenon in a natural setting using various methods, such as observation and interviews, to obtain value (Flick, 2018: 7). In this instance, data were collected through the use of semi-structured interviewing.

### **3.5.1 Semi-structured interviews**

According to Barclay (2018: 1), a semi-structured interview is a qualitative research method that incorporates a predetermined set of open questions (questions initiate discussion) with an opportunity for the interviewer to further discuss particular themes or responses. Interviews include the acquisition of information through direct contact with an person or group who possesses expertise on the topic (DePoy & Gibson, 2008: 108). An interview is based on an interview schedule, guideline or protocol that helps the researcher formulate a standardised method of data collection (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit, 2004: 55).

The flexible structure of semi-structured interviewing allows researchers to prompt or encourage the interviewees if they are looking for more information or find what they are saying interesting (Barclay, 2018: 2). Newton (2010: 1) states that an interview is a managed verbal exchange, and as such, its efficacy is dependent on the interviewer's communication skills. These include the ability to formulate questions clearly, listen carefully, pause, check or prompt appropriately, allow the interviewee to speak freely and make answering the questions easy for interviewees (Newton, 2010: 1). This method allows the researcher the freedom to ask the interviewee to elaborate on what the interviewee is saying (Barclay, 2018: 2). Semi-structured interviews also provide the ability for informants to express their own views in their own words. Semi-structured interviews work best when the interviewer has several areas to address; when there is only one opportunity to interview someone, and when more than one person may be involved in the interviews (Barclay, 2018: 2).

For this study, interviews commenced after the researcher obtained ethical clearance from both the University of South Africa (UNISA) College of Law (CLAW) (certification number: ST80 of 2018) and the DCS ethics boards. Ethical issues are discussed in more detail under section 3.6 of this chapter. The researcher interviewed all the participants personally by conducting semi-structured one-on-one interviews with the use of an interview schedule with pre-determined open-ended questions. This alleviated the problem of miscommunication, which could have arisen should the researcher not have conducted face-to-face interviews herself. As a result, clarity in the answering of the questions was enhanced. The researcher

created a trusting and open atmosphere by showing participants respect and assuring them that the information they provide in the interview would be confidential. To avoid compromising the security of participants, the one-on-one interviews in this study were not audio recorded. However, notes were taken.

### **3.6 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

Qualitative data analysis is the range of processes and procedures where the qualitative data that has been collected is transformed into explanations, understanding or interpretations of the people and situations that were investigated (Sunday, 2011: 19). Henning et al (2004: 128) asserts that analysing means "smashing data into small parts". The raw data is organised and/or modified in order to create results, conclusions and recommendations. The analysis in this study was done on data lifted from the schedule of interview questions using thematic analysis, coding and categorisation.

#### **3.6.1 Thematic analysis**

Braun and Clarke (2006: 82) explain that thematic analysis classifies research knowledge and explains it in detail. Lapadat (2010: 926) indicates that, by using thematic analysis, large volumes of data can be reduced and handled without losing the authentic significance. The type of data analysed by thematic analysis includes field notes, memos, interview transcripts, video files, journals, diaries, and photographs (Lapadat, 2010: 926). Maguire and Delahunt (2017: 2) state that the purpose of a thematic analysis is to identify themes (i.e., data trends that are interesting or relevant) and to use these themes to explain the research or to say something about the subject. It is far more than just summing up the data; it interprets a strong thematic interpretation and makes sense of the data collected.

Below are the steps that were followed during the data analysis and interpretation process in this study as stipulated in the 12-step process of Lennie, Lennie, Kojarala, Wilmore and Skuse (2011: 5-10). Lennie et al (2011: 4) emphasise that the steps are not usually undertaken in a linear way and that researchers may engage in smaller cycles of doing analysis. Because of this insight, the researcher implemented eight of Lennie et al's (2011: 5-10) steps that were suitable for this study as mentioned



below:

### **Step 1: Record the data and prepare memos**

Documentation is an integral part of the research and evaluation process (Lennie et al, 2011: 5) which assisted the researcher to keep a clear and detailed record of all the data that were collected in the form of detailed notes and transcripts. The more detailed and clear the notes are at the time of research, the easier it will be for the data to be used at a later stage.

### **Step 2: Label and archive the data**

The researcher organised the data to make it easy to use for analysis. This means the data were labelled, to make it easy for the researcher to know where a piece of information came from and how it was collected. A password protected archive was created to keep the electronic data safe and back-ups were stored in a Dropbox folder (which only the researcher had access to) in order for the data to be easily found. Hardcopies were kept in a Lever-arch file and stored in a locked cupboard in the researcher's office (see section 3.8.4 on confidentiality and anonymity).

### **Step 3: Review the research objectives**

The researcher reviewed the goals of the study which assisted in the focus of the analysis and organising the data.

### **Step 4: Carefully read through the data and begin coding**

Field notes and interview transcripts were carefully read through by the researcher. Comments were also made in different coloured pens with regards to possible patterns, issues in the data and themes in the margins to begin the coding process. Lennie et al (2011: 8) state that coding is more than simply organising data. Coding starts the process of systematically analysing it, working out what the data reveal and the relationships and patterns in the data.

### **Step 5: Interpret findings, assess contributions and summarise**

The researcher compared the results of the data analysis with the original objectives

and research questions of the study and the available literature on the topic to put the data into perspective.

### **Step 6: Identify and summarise themes**

The researcher created an initial list of codes and generated definitions for the codes in order to organise the data into categories. The main themes were later summarised to assist with understanding the findings thoroughly.

### **Step 7: Make conclusions and recommendations and prepare a draft report**

When the main research findings were identified, the researcher was able to make conclusions and recommendations.

### **Step 8: Communicate the findings**

The final stage of thematic analysis is to write up a report, which took place when fully worked themes were set. Braun and Clarke (2006: 23) add that the write-up of the report must provide reasonable evidence of the themes in the data, i.e., sufficient data extracts to indicate the occurrence of the themes.

## **3.7 RELIABILITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS OF COLLECTED DATA**

Reliability principles relate to the consistency and trustworthiness of the data (Neuman, 2000: 263). As per Sandelowski, Barroso and Voils (2007: 4), trustworthiness becomes a matter of persuasion whereby the work of the researcher is viewed and thereafter audited based on the reliability of the data. Reliability is obtained when the research instrument generates the same result consistently every time it is used, or when it is used by other researchers. Smith (2004: 958) denotes the original formulation of the word "reliability" was by quantitative researchers who believed that a study was credible if other researchers would reproduce it. To ensure reliability, the researcher conducted a research study that was free, fair, voluntary, equitable, free from personal bias and assumptions. In order for the researcher to avoid being biased in this study, reflexivity and bracketing were applied (see sections 3.3.2 and 3.7.3). Furthermore, research participants were chosen based on the knowledge they have about the topic at hand which strengthened reliability for this

study.

Gunawan (2015: 4) adds that a study needs to be reliable in order to be trustworthy. When assessing the value of the research process is important when the results of qualitative research are to be "trusted" (Noble & Smith, 2015: 34). The researcher was mindful not to add any information that did not come as a result of data gathering. Only the information gathered from participants was included as the findings of the study. The researcher ensured that the elements of trustworthiness were observed throughout the study by ensuring that results were credible, transferable, confirmable and dependable.

### **3.7.1 Credibility**

Credibility should be conducted out in a way that ensures the correct identification and explanation of the subject. Credibility relies on how well the procedures, including the meaning of the research, how the participants are selected, data collection and analytical methods, address the purported focus (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004: 109-110). Credibility, in this study, was ensured by providing detailed descriptions of the research participants and how they were selected (see section 3.4 for sampling). This enables the reader to know who the participants were and how and why they were selected.

### **3.7.2 Transferability**

Transferability is defined as the possibility of the findings to be generalised or transferred to other contexts or samples. It is concerned with the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations (Elo, Kääriäinen, Kanste, Pölkki, Utrianen, & Kyngäs, 2014: 2; Shenton, 2004: 69). In this study, transferability was ensured by providing clear and detailed descriptions of the selection and the characteristics of the participants, as explained in the preceding sub-section on credibility.

### **3.7.3 Confirmability**

Confirmability means that the same research results must be collected and verified, should the study be performed by other researchers. The research results should not

be affected by researcher bias and represent only the participants' narratives (Korstjens & Moser, 2018: 121-122). To deal with the issue of researcher bias, processes of bracketing and reflexivity were embarked on where the researcher identified her own preconceived ideas about the research participants and brought them to the fore (refer to section 3.3.2). Moreover, the researcher established conformability by comparing the data collected from the research participants with the current literature on the topic (see Chapter Four).

#### **3.7.4 Dependability**

Elo et al (2014: 2) describe dependability as the ability to remain consistent over time and under various conditions. This means the results should be reliable and should be able to be repeated. To ensure dependability of this study, the researcher reported the research process in great detail which enables other researchers to repeat the study and possibly arrive at the same findings (refer to the research methodology section in this chapter).

### **3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The protection of people through the implementation of acceptable ethical standards is essential in any research study. In a qualitative study, ethical concerns have a particular meaning due to the in-depth nature of the research process. Performing face-to-face interviews with a diverse or vulnerable group of participants becomes more prominent for ethical problems. This is attributed to the fact that they may become stressed while expressing their feelings during the interview session (Roshaidai & Arifin, 2018: 30).

The fact that human beings are the subjects of this research brings to the forefront specific ethical issues that would not usually be important in the pure, clinical laboratory settings found in the natural sciences (Robson & McCartan, 2016: 209). As emphasized by Roshaidai and Arifin (2018:32), it is the researcher's responsibility to maintain that participants have the free will to participate in the study; to respect the identity of the participants throughout the selection and dissemination process; and to promote clear and honest research findings without misleading the readers.

The sections that follow focus on ways in which research ethics were applied in this research.

### **3.8.1 Informed consent and voluntary participation**

The written consent guarantees that the parties have complete information and cooperation. In the consent form, the purpose and intent of the study must be clarified in such a way that individuals fully understand the basic elements of the study and are therefore able to make a deliberate and fully considered decisions about their participation (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit, 2005: 74). The abovementioned was adhered to in this study when inviting the participants to partake in the research. The aim and objectives of the research were shared with each of the research participants and they were further informed and assured that they were not forced to participate in the study. Additionally, should the research conditions change, the respondents should be afforded the opportunity to reiterate their approval to the study. By conducting interviews in an ethical and professional manner, the researcher maintained that the participants felt free, transparent and comfortable with the approach and the study. Furthermore, in order to adhere to the ethical requirements, a consent letter explaining the nature of the study and the time required from the participants was signed and dated by both the researcher and the participant (refer to Annexure A).

### **3.8.2 Non-maleficence (Do not harm)**

Babbie and Mouton (2007: 68) declare that harm can include both emotional and psychological pain, and bodily harm. Participants should never be harmed in any way. Robson and McCartan (2016: 222) suggest that a researcher has an ethical responsibility to protect his / her research participants, within acceptable limits, from any sort of emotional distress (e.g. anxiety) that may occur from the research study. Although this was a sensitive study, the researcher ensured that participants were not harmed in any way by not revealing any information that could embarrass the participants or expose them to harmful activities. The researcher made the participants aware that they were not forced or obliged to answer questions that made them feel uncomfortable and that they were free to take a break or discontinue

the interview should they wish to.

### **3.8.3 Beneficence**

Remler and Van Ryzin (2011: 483) explain that beneficence is a concept whereby the research benefits participants and that profit reduce the risk of involvement. There were no financial gains or promises made for the participants in this study. Nonetheless, the study seeks to make a valuable contribution to the scientific research community and for the formal law enforcement to have an in-depth understanding of the contributing reasons of the phenomenon and how it can be prevented. In addition, it is also the researcher's hope that the findings from the study will serve as a document of knowledge to individuals who are not as knowledgeable about the phenomenon of female drug mules and to bring awareness of drug smuggling and the dangers thereof.

### **3.8.4 Confidentiality and anonymity**

Confidentiality is guaranteed when the researcher can recognise the response of a participant, but chooses not to disclose any information in public (De Vos et al, 2011: 119). This was implemented by upholding that the details released as part of the study remains among the researcher, participant and other informed persons within the research framework (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013: 02). Furthermore, the researcher ensured confidentiality by storing the hard copy and electronic copies of the transcribed notes in an Lever-arch file locked in a cupboard and password protected laptop respectively (also see point 3.6.1). Electronic transcriptions were further saved in a password protected database called Dropbox in order for the data to be safe and only the researcher had access to the information (refer to sub-section 3.6.1). The data will be destroyed five years after completing the study. The hardcopies will be destroyed by shredding whereas the electronic versions of the research documents will be deleted permanently from the researcher's laptop as well as the Dropbox.

Anonymity is assured when no one may create a relation between a given statement and a particular respondent. The anonymity method guarantees that the participant's identity remains unknown to the public or parties who are not specifically involved in

the research. For this study, data were collected through face-to-face interviews hence absolute anonymity could not be ensured since the researcher and correctional centre staff knew who the participants were. However, the researcher ensured that partial anonymity is ensured as the identity of the participant will remain unknown to any other persons. When reporting research findings, the latter was achieved through the use of numbers to refer to the research participants which also ensured that direct quotes could not be linked to participants (refer to the next chapter).

### **3.9 SUMMARY**

In this chapter, the research methodology and design, sampling size, ethical considerations, data collection method, data analysis method and demonstration of trustworthiness of the research data were described. In the following chapter, data analysis, interpretation and deduction are discussed.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND DEDUCTIONS**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents a discussion of the analysed data and findings of the study with reference to female drug mules incarcerated at Kgoši Mampuru II and Johannesburg correctional centres. Data were collected through the use of semi-structured face-to-face interviews. The presented findings were the result of interviews conducted with 20 incarcerated female drug mules from Kgoši Mampuru II (n=10) and Johannesburg Female Correctional Centres (n=10). The interviews were conducted in English except for Participant 14 who answered all the questions in isiXhosa as she was comfortable speaking in her mother tongue. The researcher, also an isiXhosa speaker, translated the interview into English before transcribing it verbatim. It is also important to note that the participants who did not speak English gave consent for another female offender (who was also part of the study) to translate the interview process therefore ethical standards were still upheld. As discussed in Chapter Three, sub-section 3.4.1, a thematic analysis process was followed in order to analyse the data. The process of coding, where data were broken down into different elements, was followed. The researcher then identified key words which were categorised according to the relevant themes that emerged from the participants' experiences. It is important to note that the interviews were set to allow the women to tell their own stories; hence this section needs to be read in the understanding that the information provided is either subjective perspectives or lived experiences.

#### **4.2 INTERPRETATION OF DATA**

This section is reserved for the interpretation and analysis of the data retrieved from the face-to-face semi-structured interviews conducted with 20 research participants and the researcher.

##### **4.2.1 Demographic information of participants**

Table 4.1 provides a short summary of the biographical details of each female and the length of their sentences for drug smuggling.



**Table 4.1: Demographic information of the participants**

Research participant	Demographic information				
	Age	Race/Nationality	Marital status	Number of children	Length of sentence
	<b>Kgoši Mampuru female correctional centre participants</b>				
<b>01</b>	42	African/Congolese	Single	0	16 years
<b>02</b>	51	Asian/Thai	Married	3	18 years
<b>03</b>	35	African/South African	Single	0	18 years
<b>04</b>	33	Spanish/Brazilian	Single	2	16 years
<b>05</b>	32	Spanish/Venezuelan	Married	3	10 years
<b>06</b>	36	African/Nigerian	Single	2	6 years
<b>07</b>	26	Caucasian/South African	Single	0	4 years
<b>08</b>	53	African/Zimbabwean	Married	3	8 years
<b>09</b>	48	African/South Africa	Single	3	27 years
<b>10</b>	30	Spanish/Paraguayan	Single	1	15 years
	<b>Johannesburg female correctional centre participants</b>				
<b>11</b>	40	African/South Africa	Single	1	18 years
<b>12</b>	44	African/Angolan	Married	2	10 years
<b>13</b>	42	Caucasian/ South African	Single	3	15 years
<b>14</b>	44	African/South African	Divorced	3	10 years
<b>15</b>	41	African/Mozambican	Single	4	20 years
<b>16</b>	38	African/South African	Single	2	12 years
<b>17</b>	37	African/Mozambican	Divorced	4	10 years
<b>18</b>	42	Creole/Cabo Verdean	Divorced	4	18 years
<b>19</b>	44	Spanish/Brazilian	Single	1	15 years
<b>20</b>	49	African/Malawian	Widow	6	20 years

The demographical information of the 20 research participants with regards to their age, marital status, race and ethnic group as well the sentences that they are serving for drug smuggling are represented in the table.

#### **4.2.1.1 Age at the time of the interview**

The ages of the research participants of this study were grouped into six categories, namely, 25-30, 31-35, 36-40, 41-45, 46-50 and 51-55.

At the time of the interviews, one participant (Participant 07) was 26 years old and three research participants (Participants 03, 05 and 10) were in the age group of 30-35. Four participants (Participants 04, 06, 16 and 17) were between the ages of 35 and 40. Eight research participants (Participants 01, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 18 and 19), were in the age group of 40 to 45 years old and two research participants (Participants 09 and 20) were between 45 and 50 years old. Lastly, the 50-55 age group category comprised two participants (Participants 02 and 08).

Eight out of 20 participants fell into the age category of 40-45 years old. The age demographic in this study varies to the findings of Van Heerden (2014: 89) in sub-section 2.4.2.1 where the average age of a drug mule was between the ages of 30 and 35.

#### **4.2.1.2 Race**

The research participants were quite diversified where race is concerned. Most of the participants (n=12) comprised Africans (Participants 01, 03, 06, 08, 09, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17 and 20). Two identified themselves as Caucasian (Participants 07 and 13). Furthermore, four participants were Spanish (Participants 04, 05, 10 and 19), one was Asian (Participant 02) and the last participant (Participant 18) identified herself as Creole. Romer (2019: 1) defines Creole as a term of identification for people of colour of mixed African and European descent. The diversity in the participants' race may indicate that the recruitment of drug mules is not racially discriminatory, making all racial groups susceptible to victimisation.

#### **4.2.1.3 Nationality**

According to the PMG (2017: 4), there are 11 482 foreign nationals incarcerated in South African correctional centres. In this study, seven out of the 20 interviewees were born in South Africa (Participants 03, 07, 09, 11, 13, 14 and 16). Two participants are Brazilian (Participants 19 and 04), one participant is Thai (Participant 02), one participant is Cabo Verdean (Participant 18), one participant is Venezuelan (Participant 05), one participant is Zimbabwean (Participant 08), one participant is Nigerian (Participant 06) and two participants are Mozambican (Participant 15 and 017). One research participant (Participant 20) was born in Malawi, one was born in Paraguay (Participant 10). The last two participants were born in Angola (Participant 12) and Congo (Participant 01).

#### **4.2.1.4 Marital status at the time of the interview**

More than half (12) of the respondents were single while four research participants were married at the time of both the criminal activities and the interview. Two of interviewees divorced before incarceration and one interviewee was divorced after incarceration. Only one interviewee was a widow.

#### **4.2.1.5 Number of children**

Out of the 20 research participants, eight interviewees reported that they had one or two children; eight had three or four children; one had six children while three reported that they had no children. The socialist feminist theory in sub-section 2.7.1.1.5 highlights that women should take control of their own bodies and their reproductive functions with the objective of preventing the possibility of criminality (Tibbetts & Hemmens, 2015: 364). Although this theory does not discuss the kind of measures women can take in order to take charge of their reproductive functions to reduce crime rates, data reveals that women who frequently reproduce, especially in disadvantaged environments, are more prone to committing crimes because of the responsibility of raising and financially supporting more children with no other income (Tibbetts & Hemmens, 2015: 364). The basis of the theory, as previously discussed in 2.7.1.1.5, aligns with the discussion of social norm expectations with regards to the role of women who are culturally expected to have children as highlighted under

#### sub-section 4.4.1.

Literature by Meyer and Nishimwe-Niyibanira (2016), and Viola and Martinez (2007) (see sub-section 4.2.2.2) indicates that a household with more children or family members requires expenditure which can put an added financial and emotional burden on the household or the breadwinner of the home (also refer to the finding on number of siblings above). Before incarceration, most of the participants of this study were single parents, the heads of their households and breadwinners. Thus, an assumption can be made that, should a woman have only one or two children, she should still have the capacity to own the responsibility of taking care of their children.

The researcher felt it was important to ask the research participants about their relationship with their children while incarcerated, especially since most of the interviewees were not South African citizens and were single mothers before incarceration (n=11). Thirteen of the research participants indicated that their relationship with their children would be better if they were in their home country. Research Participant 10 shared, *“I’m all the way here. My child is at home. It is difficult to tell a small boy that I will not come home”*. When the research participant was asked how often she communicated with her son, she said, *“When the embassy comes. After three months they [the embassy] come. I see him and my family on the phone. But it is not enough”*. Fifteen of the participants indicated they depend on their family members (parents, siblings and ex-husbands) to take care and raise their children during their incarceration. Participant 04 indicated that she feels helpless because she cannot cater for her children. She reported: *“My first born is 17 and I am here. I can’t help with anything and they won’t see me again. I cry everyday but I try and be strong. It is my fault I am here but there is nothing I can do”*. When the researcher asked Participant 04 who takes care of her four children, she said, *“No one ... they live alone, and they ask family to help. It’s very difficult for them.”*

Meintjes, Hall, Marera and Boule (2010: 40) stipulate that children in child-headed households may be vulnerable in several aspects. They tend to be disproportionately disadvantaged and have low to no access to government subsidies and they may be vulnerable to violence, abuse and exploitation. The issue of child-headed households can lead to psychological and emotional effects and can lead to a cycle

of crime as “poverty begets poverty”, and thus, like their mothers, they may be at high risk of committing crimes to put food on their tables. Dlungwana (2007: 73) suggests that formal and informal support can assist child-headed households as children are not only faced with material problems, but also with a variety of social and economic problems (Dlungwana, 2007: 73). When there is sufficient and accessible support, the likelihood of children resorting to crime or criminal behaviour to survive, just like their parent did, may decrease.

The foreign national research participants also shared that their biggest concern regarding their children was whether their children will still remember them while they are incarcerated. As foreigners incarcerated in South Africa, their families do not have the necessary finances for their family and children to visit them at the correctional centres. Participant 05 shared, *“I miss my children, but I don’t know if I want them to see me in this place”*.

#### **4.2.1.6 Employment history before incarceration**

According to Dorado (1996: 35), women are propelled into drug trafficking out of economic desperation. The research participants for this study occupied various employment posts. The majority (n=13) of the interviewees were employed at the time of arrest. Occupations, such as saleswomen (Participants 01 and 17), masseuse (Participant 02), domestic worker and/or nanny (Participants 05 and 08), waitress (Participant 04), security guard (Participant 14), administrator (Participant 06), restaurant assistant manager (Participant 10), light technician (Participant 11), cashier (Participant 12), seamstress (Participant 18) and bartender (Participant 13), were listed by the participants. Two interviewees were self-employed and owned their own businesses (Participants 15 and 19). Research Participant 19 stated that she was also a qualified physiotherapist and worked at a hospital while owning two hair salons which brought her more income. The remaining of the research participants (n=5) were unemployed at the time of arrest (Participants 03, 07, 09, 16 and 20).

#### **4.2.1.7 Educational background**

All interviewees, with the exception of three, had received some secondary

education. Of the 17 participants who received secondary education, only eight completed Grade 12. In addition, only two respondents obtained a post-matric qualification – a bachelor in physiotherapy and a diploma in administration. Of the seven offenders who did not reach matric, six gave a lack of finances as a reason while one research participant was pregnant and had to leave school. Bailey (2013: 128) notes that poverty places women at particularly high risk, in large part due to their role as caregiver. Family obligations and economic need often affect the abilities of young girls to concentrate on studying or to attend school altogether (Bailey 2013: 128). When Participant 18 was asked if she went to school, she reported, *“I didn’t make it too far because money at home started to be a problem, I had to leave grade 4”*. There were some similarities in the participants’ reasons for not completing their foundation education. Participant 08 said, *“I left school in grade 7, I didn’t finish. I had to go look for work to help my mother”*. Participant 010 also added, *“I went to school, but I didn’t finish, I had to get a job after my mother died. School was not important, because we need to eat, we had to live. I left [school]”*.

#### **4.2.1.8 Summary of the demographical information of participants**

The demographical information of the interviewees under sub-section 2.4.2.1 showed a range of different countries, backgrounds and ages as in the study conducted by Marshall and Moreton (2011). The demographical information of the female drug mules in this study is therefore as follows:

- They are aged between 26 and 53 years of age.
- They are from South Africa, Brazil, Thailand, Cabo Verde, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Mozambique, Malawi, Paraguay, Angola and Congo.
- They are Asian, Creole, Caucasian and African.

From the seven South African respondents who participated in this study, two were white and five were black. Literature by Molopyane (2019) under sub-section 2.3.1 adds that black women are the most affected as a result of the high unemployment rates of all groups which creates secondary implications and effects young females who are not in training, employment or education as the most vulnerable members of society. The research findings validate the literature as there were more black South African women in this study than white women. In addition, most of the black South

African women did not complete secondary school in comparison to the two white South Africans. On the other hand, even though the demographic shows that black women are at a greater risk of being recruited as drug mules, drug trafficking syndicates are not racially discriminatory, as previously mentioned.

- The interviewees were raised by single parents (a majority of single mothers) and were mothers themselves.
- The majority only completed secondary schooling.
- Most of the women were working either full time or part time. Before their incarceration, they worked at a variety of jobs such as waitress, nanny, administrative assistant, cashier and a small business owner.

The research findings on the demographical information of the interviewees are not in agreement with the findings of Bailey (2013: 127), Unlu and Ekici (2012: 302) in sub-section 2.4.2.1. However, the findings are very similar to the findings of Marshall and Moreton (2011: 3) discussed in sub-section 2.4.2.1, with reference to the diversity of the female drug mules in terms of nationality, race, age, occupation, employment status and motherhood.

#### **4.2.2 Family dynamics**

According to Farrington (2010: 216), offending is predicted by many family variables. The strongest predictor is typically the parents who is violent or antisocial. Many solid and replicable predictors include large families, weak parental supervision, parental conflict and disrupted families. Farrington (2010: 213) adds that it is mainly the responsibility of the family to teach delinquents acceptable behaviours based on societal standards and help them to uphold those standards. In this section, family risk factors are discussed in terms of parental involvement, number of siblings and birth position.

##### **4.2.2.1 Parental involvement**

Ten of the research participants indicated that they were not raised by both their parents. Six of the participants were raised by a single mother and two participants were raised by a single father. When participant 06 was asked to share with the researcher about her parental involvement and the social background she grew up

in, the participant indicated that she was not comfortable talking about her family dynamics and the researcher respected her decision.

Richter and Lemola (2017: 1) state that individuals, mostly children who were raised in single-mother households, have higher possibilities of suffering from less effective guardianship and a higher likelihood of family distress and conflicts. When research participants who were raised by single mothers were asked if they thought the presence of their fathers would have impacted their decision to smuggle drugs Participant 08 said, *“No, I don’t think so. That is something that happened to me when I was young, [the absence of her father] so I don’t live my life asking why he is not in my life”*. Participant 09, on the other hand, stated that

*“maybe if he was in my life and help my mother with money, then maybe our life will be better. Most of the time, my grandmother was around, my mom was working. If maybe, he was there to show me the way when I told my family what I was doing to get money, maybe he would know better”*.

It is important to also note that fatherlessness does not necessarily compel a person to commit a crime. As per StatsSA (2019b), almost six out of every ten households which are headed by males (59,3 per cent ) compared to over seven out of every ten households which are headed by females (74,8 per cent) in traditional areas were living under the upper-bound poverty line (StatsSA, 2019b). Schwartz (2004: 2) suggests that father absence is a problematic factor because it reflects inadequate social control through insufficient supervision. Furthermore, the absence of a father may only act as a substitute for economic disadvantage and highlights the lack of social capital and resources in areas where family-centred me are deficient.

One offender (Participant 19) was raised by her father and step-mother; she stated that, *“my mother died when I was little, so my father and stepmother raised us. My father was working and she [stepmother] would be at home”*. Research Participant 15 was raised by her aunt; she explained that she never knew her parents: *“I know that my aunt was there for me, I don’t know my parents, I don’t remember them. My aunt says they were sick, but some say they left me. I don’t know”*. Only one participant indicated that they were raised by both of their parents. Participant 07 indicated, *“I lived with both of my parents until I was 21. I had a good life; my parents*



*were there for me but then I left to live with my boyfriend because I wanted to be a big girl”.*

#### **4.2.2.2 Number of siblings**

Eight of the research participants had either one or two siblings, followed by five participants who stated that they had three or four siblings. Four participants reported that they had five or six siblings and five participants had seven or eight siblings. According to the Central Intelligence Agency (2018), the average number of children born per woman in South Africa is 2.26 children. According to Parks (2013: 8), family size influences the relationship between family structure, criminality and delinquency. In particular, older adolescents including those from bigger families who are at a greater risk of being involved in youth crimes. One participant confirmed that having eight siblings affected their childhood upbringing:

*“I grew up with my aunt and eight siblings. There is a lot of us but others passed away now. It was not good because we struggled. It was bad but sometimes other family [members] would help us because we didn’t eat every day and we would be hungry” (Participant 15).*

As highlighted in the above excerpt, an increase in household size is likely to put an extra burden on the household (Meyer & Nishimwe-Niyibanira, 2016: 2285) because generally, a larger household size means larger expenditures for food, shelter, clothing, health, education and other basic needs (Viola & Martinez, 2007: 4).

#### **4.2.2.3 Birth position**

When respondents were asked which position, in relation to their siblings they were born, nine of the research participants indicated that they were born first while eight were born as middle children and three of the research participants indicated that they were born last. There seems to be a relation between being involved in drug smuggling and being born first which was one of the interesting demographical findings in this study. Eight of the ten participants who were raised by single parents were born first. Some of the participants in this demographic had to take responsibility as the first born or as “deputy parents” and help their parent to take care of their family which eventually resulted in smuggling drugs. As per Thobane,

2014: 127; Ortiz, 2009:37 and Wilson, 2009:1) this may be connected to the African, Caucasian and Spanish culture where the first-born child takes on the responsibility of a parent when there are no elders in the home, including in child-headed households. The significance of this demographic was to find out if the reason the respondents smuggled drugs was as a result of the responsibility that was placed on them by their families or parents as first born children to help out financially.

#### **4.2.3 Criminal data**

This section includes the criminal data of the research participants, specifically, the type of crime the participants are incarcerated for, the age of arrest, the length of the sentence and whether the participants are repeat offenders or not.

##### **4.2.3.1 The crime**

As indicated by the DoJ & CD (1992: 38), the Drugs and Drug Trafficking Act 140 of 1992 makes provision for the essential crimes pertaining to drugs (see sub-section 2.6.1). The two most important crimes provided for in the Act are dealing in drugs and the use or possession of drugs. Stevens (2014: 37) adds that dealing in drugs is the more serious of the two offences carrying harsher sentences or penalties (see section 17(c) and (e) of the Act read with sections 13(e) and (f). According to Stevens (2014: 37), the Act divides drugs into three general categories, which are: dependence producing substances; dangerous dependence producing substances; and undesirable dependence producing substances.

In this study, 19 of the 20 participants were sentenced for dealing in drugs. Participant 14, however, was sentenced for dealing in a dangerous dependence producing substance because she was in possession of drugs in an aircraft. With reference to Participant 14, section 13 (a) of the Drugs and Drug Trafficking Act 140 of 1992 stipulates that “any individual who places any drug in the possession, or in the premises, vehicle, vessel or aircraft shall be guilty of an offence” (Department of Justice, 1998: 38).

The researcher was also able to confirm the crime the participants were incarcerated for from the list provided by the correctional centres (see sub-section 3.4.1.1) and on

the identity card, called a G353 card, that all the sentenced offenders have to carry with them at all times. As discussed in section 2.1 and 2.6.2, the abovementioned crimes are classified by the SAPS as drug-related crimes and, according to the DCS, women who are incarcerated for drug related crimes are categorised under narcotics.

#### 4.2.3.2 Year each participant started smuggling drugs

Table 4.2 demonstrates the year each research participant started to smuggle drugs.

**Table 4.2: Year participants started smuggling drugs**

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Year each participant started smuggling drugs</b>	<b>Number of participants</b>
09	2004	01
02	2008	01
03, 05, 18	2010	03
04, 13, 19	2011	03
01, 10, 11, 12	2012	04
16, 17	2013	02
14	2014	01
08, 15	2016	02
06, 07 ,20	2018	03

As seen in the table above, four participants started smuggling drugs for the first time in 2012. Furthermore, three participants began smuggling drugs in 2010 and three in 2011 while two participants started smuggling drugs in 2013 and another two in 2016. One participant began smuggling drugs in 2004, one 2008 and another one in 2014. An important factor to note is that the year each drug mule began smuggling drugs (as per the table above) is not a representation of the duration of the participants in illicit drug trafficking. Some drug mules did not smuggle drugs every

year since they started smuggling. For example, Participant 09 began smuggling drugs in 2004, however she did not smuggle drugs every year leading up to her arrest; she would take breaks of two or more years before smuggling drugs again. The time frames for a drug mule to smuggle drugs are spaced out to avoid becoming conspicuous. All of the research participants reported that they had never been previously incarcerated and that they were first time-sentenced offenders (for smuggling drugs).

#### 4.2.3.3 Length of sentence

As depicted in the Department of Justice (1998: 38), Drugs and Drug Trafficking Act 140 of 1992, the penalties for any person who is convicted of dealing in drugs as per section 17 (c) and (e) shall be liable for:

“(c) in the case of an offence referred to in section 13 (e), to such fine as the court may deem fit to impose, or to imprisonment for a period not exceeding 10 years, or to both such fine and such imprisonment;

(e) in the case of an offence referred to in section 13 (f), to imprisonment for a period not exceeding 25 years, or to both such imprisonment and such fine as the court may deem fit to impose” (DoJ & CD, 1992: 19) (also refer to section 2.6.1 and 2.6.2).

Amongst the 20 research participants in this study, the shortest incarceration sentence imposed was four years while the longest was 27 years.

**Table 4.3: Sentence length of participants**

Sentence length of participants		
Participant	Sentence length	Number of participants
07	1-4 years	01
06, 08, 12,14, 17	5-10 years	04
05, 10, 13, 16, 19	11-15 years	07
01, 02, 03, 04, 11, 15, 18, 20	16-20 years	07
09	21-27 years	01

The detailed sentence length of the participants at the time of the interviews, are as follows: one participant (Participant 07) was sentenced to four years; four participants (Participants 05, 06, 08 and 17) were sentenced to between five and ten years; seven of the participants (Participants 10, 12, 13, 14, 16, 18 and 19) were sentenced between 11 and 15 years; seven of the participants (Participants 01, 02, 03, 04, 11, 15 and 20) were sentenced between 16 and 20 years; Participant 09 had the highest number of years of incarceration – 27 years. When the researcher asked why her sentence was high, she said,

*“The judge said I am a harm in society. You see, it is not my first-time smuggling drugs, I’ve done it many times, but this is the first time being arrested. Maybe also the drugs I was carrying was a lot.”*

As stipulated in Table 4.4 (see section 4.5), Participant 09 smuggled 10kg, 1kg, 5kg and 1kg of cocaine. She had smuggled drugs without being caught three times prior and was only arrested on her last delivery to South Africa. Even though Participant 09 assumes that the number of times she smuggled drugs contributed to her lengthy sentence, this could not be true as Participant 09 stated that, at the time of her trial and sentencing, the court was not aware of her previous criminal acts of smuggling drugs. As previously mentioned in sub-section 2.6.1 and 4.2.3.3, section 17 (e) of the Drugs and Drug Trafficking Act 140 of 1992 stipulates that an offence referred to in section 13 (f), can be sentenced for a period not exceeding 25 years, or a fine, as the court may deem fit to impose (DoJ & CD, 1992: 19). The Act, however, does not specify whether the amount of drugs (in kilograms) influences the length of the sentence. The researcher was unable to ascertain why this particular participant was sentenced to a period exceeding 25 years, as stipulated by the Act.

Participant 07 was incarcerated for four years, which was the lowest sentence in the research sample. When the researcher asked Participant 07 why her sentence was low, she indicated,

*“I had proof to show that I was set up. My father is an investigator, that’s his job. So, when I was getting the threats, my lawyer was able to show the judge the WhatsApp messages and I gave up names. But I’m in prison anyway because I did smuggle the drugs instead of reporting it in the first place.”*

As per the penalties indicated in the South African Drugs and Drug Trafficking Act 140 of 1992 (DoJ & CD, 1992: 19), the length and intensity of these sentences indicate the seriousness of the offence. Even though the Drugs and Drug Trafficking Act 140 of 1992 (DoJ & CD, 1992: 19) does not state whether the amount of drugs an individual has on their possession may influence the length of the sentence, the Act does state in section 5 (a) and (b) that an individual may be penalised or sentenced according to the type of drugs they are in possession of. The Drugs and Drug Trafficking Act 140 of 1992 specifies that cocaine falls under Schedule 2, Part II of dangerous dependence-producing substances and heroin is categorised under Schedule 2, Part III of undesirable dependence-producing substances (see Annexure F). Any individual who is found in possession of the abovementioned drugs (with reference to the type of drugs smuggled by the participants in this study) may be sentenced to 10 to 25 years of imprisonment, as the court may deem fit to impose (Department of Justice, 1999: 12).

It can be argued that CJS tends to respond to this category of offenders, female drug mules, based on the societal standards on how women "should" behave (Mallicoat, 2019: 5). When women participate in crime, it contradicts the socially imposed gender stereotypes of female behaviour. As a result, women may be punished in these cases not only for breaking the law but also for violating the socially constructed gender (Mallicoat, 2019: 5). As previously discussed in sub-section 2.7.1, in Marxist feminist theory, those who design the laws in their own interest have the privilege and capacity to defend themselves individually if they break the law. The abovementioned highlights the issue of patriarchy faced by women in the CJS, which also corroborates with one of the focuses of the Marxist feminist theory and radical feminist theory as discussed in sub-sections 2.7.1.1.2 and 2.7.1.1.3. The Marxist theory believes that drug trafficking is a social harm perpetrated by the powerful (see sub-section 2.7.1.1.2). However, the law, not only in South Africa, does not consider the social, mental or financial risk factors of drug mules as exploitation of women, therefore harsh penalties are imposed on them. Women may also be less conscious of their legal rights and may not be liable for non-custodial sanctions and measures when their social, mental and social vulnerability are considered as risk factors (UNODC, 2018: 32).

Critical criminology argues that crimes committed by the working-class (female drug mules) are insignificant in comparison to “crimes of the powerful” (those of drug trafficking syndicates) where the perpetrators can hire accountants and lawyers to protect them and have powerful acquaintances that can lobby on their behalf. This may also explain why drug mules are always caught by law enforcement while drug trafficking syndicates, recruiters and leaders seem to escape justice, as previously discussed in literature by Tibbetts and Hemmens (2015: 360) under sub-section 2.7.1.1.2.

#### **4.2.3.4 Repeat offending**

As per sub-section 4.2.3.2, all the participants of this study reported that they had never been incarcerated before for any crime or for the crime in question. This reveals that there was no pattern of repeat offending in this sample of participants. However, there are professional drug mules (see sub-section 2.4.1) who smuggle drugs and evade arrest. Participants 09 and 13 are the only females in this study who had smuggled drugs more than once.

Participant 09 reported, *“I smuggled drugs four times... I smuggled the drugs, but I didn’t get caught three times, but I got arrested when I came back from my fourth trip”*. When the researcher asked the participant if she regarded herself as a professional drug mule, she explained, *“Uh...not really but I guess so because I wasn’t a drug mule. I did more than once, I was trusted so I knew what I was doing, and I always knew what was happening.”*

*“My first time was in 2011, I went to Pakistan, then I had to go to Thailand to go do the job of that girl that was all over the news, but that job didn’t happen. But when I came back from the last one in Brazil the last time, that’s when I got arrested”* (Participant 13).

Research participants, who acknowledged that they knowingly smuggled drugs, stated that they would never smuggle any drugs again as they are more aware of the consequences and stress their criminal actions have caused their families and themselves (see section 4.6). However, Murhula and Singh (2019: 27), Khwela (2015: 409) and Lekalakala (2016: 31) show that offenders re-offend for different

reasons, such as the failure of rehabilitation programmes, economic pressures, failure of support in reintegration, peer pressure and other social provocations.

An analysis of the criminal data from this sample reveals that the average female drug mule in this group is a first-time offender and has never been incarcerated before. Participants were sentenced to between four and 27 years of imprisonment in a South African court, according to the Drugs and Drug Trafficking Act 140 of 1992, for dealing in drugs and dangerous dependence producing substances.

### **4.3 MOTIVATING FACTORS FOR SMUGGLING DRUGS**

The interviewees reported that they became involved in smuggling drugs because of economic needs, coercion and deception. The majority of participants in this study (n=18) acknowledged that the most important factor that contributed to their smuggling drugs was the need for money. According to the participants, the need for money to support their families and children resulted in them making impulsive choices. Even though some of the participants (n=8) stated that they were deceived and were not aware that they would be smuggling drugs, the main reason for accepting the false opportunity presented to them was the desire for financial stability (see sub-section 4.3.1).

This means that a low income and a socio-disadvantaged environment were the motivations that caused women to smuggle drugs. Literature by Hunnicutt and Broidy (2004: 130) (see sub-section 2.7.1.1) states that feminist criminology acknowledges that female crime is related to economic need. Literature by White et al (2017: 123) states that the Marxist theory displays how poverty and low wages (as reported by female drug mules) impact the process of criminalisation (see sub-section 2.7.1.1.2). Studies by Van Heerden (2014: 123), Bailey (2013: 117) and Fleetwood (2014a: 16) also highlight these factors as causes of drug smuggling.

The other two participants stated that they engaged in smuggling drugs for the free travelling experience and as a result of coercion. When the researcher asked Participant 13 what her main reason for smuggling drugs was, she responded:

*“For travelling. I like nice things, I did, and my boyfriend knew that because we*



*would buy things together. I went out of the country once before with my boyfriend and I wanted the experience, and to get money from my boyfriend when I travel.”*

When Participant 07 was asked by the researcher for her reasons for smuggling drugs, she stated that she was threatened by the drug dealers and she felt compelled to smuggle drugs:

*“So, this is what happened ... I had a friend who was with her boyfriend so she could support her drug habits, her boyfriend is a drug dealer but that didn’t bother me because I don’t use drugs, I only smoke cigarettes. So now, what happened was, my friend eventually had to pay for all the free drugs, so she became a drug smuggler, that’s what she told me. Then she went to Brazil and was supposed to bring back the drugs to South Africa but instead she didn’t come back and her boyfriend couldn’t find her. I think that made him angry because he spent a lot of money to make sure that she has a safe trip home without being arrested and stuff. Her boyfriend kept on calling me to ask me where she is and, when I told him I didn’t know, he would say that I was lying because she’s my friend. After a few days he calls me again and says that I have to make the same trip as my friend for the business he lost and, if I didn’t, my family would be harmed. Then when I said no because why must I get involved? They started threatening me and I got scared. I couldn’t tell the police and my family because I was scared, and I got myself into some illegal stuff. And, at that time, I moved back home and my boyfriend and I were not talking because he warned me about these people. I was really scared because they would know where I was all the time and where my family was. I ended up doing it because I thought it would just be one quick trip. I lied to my family and said I’m going for a short trip in Brazil with the money I saved.”*

Other reasons that were highlighted by the respondents for smuggling drugs were their socio-economic backgrounds, poverty and unemployment.

#### **4.3.1 Disadvantaged socio-economic background and poverty**

As previously discussed in Chapter Two, disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds are one of the reasons that lead women to smuggle drugs. As a result, almost half of the research participants (n=8) grew up in difficult circumstances

characterised by poverty and a lack of opportunities to create better lives for themselves. Some of the participants (n=4) grew up in middle class environments with stable households but later faced economic challenges as adults (see section 4.3.2).

Below are some of the reasons that motivated the research participants to smuggle drugs as a result of their disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds:

*"I grew up in Congo with my mother and sister, I never knew my father. My mother did not have a stable job so some days we would be hungry. Growing up was not easy because I even had to leave school. I've struggled all my life, but I kept trying" (Participant 01).*

*"My father passed away when I was a small girl and I grew up poor then I got married young and my husband died so I've been struggling by myself and I never wanted my children to grow up like me. So that's why I ended up doing what I did. I thought about my children and their lives because the money from my job was not enough for all my children" (Participant 05).*

*"Life was not good. There was no one to help my mother. She was a domestic worker and she struggled to take care of all of us when she didn't have half jobs [temporary work or 'piece job']. We didn't have money and some days we won't eat" (Participant 08).*

*"My life is hectic. Growing up poor is not games. Till now, I'm still poor, my family is still struggling. I don't know who my father is, he didn't raise me, only my mother but she tried to work, and I was raised by my grandmother when my mother was working but money came hard. We would live on my grandmother's grant [government social grant] and there was a lot of us. We would struggle and jobs was scarce" (Participant 09).*

*"My mother passed away when I was two years old and my father tried to raise us till I was nine, I think. I didn't grow up with my family when I was small. Me and my sisters had to live in different places. I moved a lot. I don't remember having money growing up because I didn't finish school" (Participant 14).*

*"It was never easy. Like I said, I didn't have parents, my aunt was there, and she took care of all of us, but it was not easy. Sometimes we had to ask from*

*neighbours for food and clothes” (Participant 15).*

*“I don’t like to think about my life growing up. It wasn’t easy, it wasn’t nice. It was hard because we really struggled” (Participant 16).*

*“I used to see from other children in school that we didn’t have money. When I grew up, I saw my mother’s family help because she was divorced, and my father left us. We would eat the food at school because there was no food for all of us” (Participant 17).*

According to the 2018 World Bank (2018c: xii) report, more than half (30 million people) of South Africans live below the national poverty line of R992 per month per household. South Africa has been deemed the most unequal country in the world as it has the largest inequality gap between the rich and the poor. The groups affected by poverty are black people, the unemployed, the less educated, female-headed households, large families and children (The World Bank, 2018c) (see literature discussed under sub-section 4.3.1 by StatsSA [2019b] and Reckdenwald and Parker [2008: 5]). In 2015, South Africa had a gini-coefficient of 63,0 (one of the highest since 1994) making it the most unequal country globally (The World Bank, 2018c: 43). The gini-coefficient measures inequality where 1,00 indicates absolute inequality and 0,00 is an indication of absolute equality (Van Dalsen & Simkins, 2019). One reason why unemployment remains a major concern in South Africa is that the number of jobs generated since 1994 does not match the growth of the labour force. (The World Bank, 2018c). Subsequently, unemployment remains high, as discussed in Chapter Two. According to StatsSA (2019b), approximately 40,0 per cent of South Africans were living below the upper-bound poverty line (UBPL). The proportion of females living below the UBPL was 16,9 per cent more than that of households headed by males (49,9 per cent versus 33,0 per cent). Similar to unemployment, poverty (caused by inequality) is one of the motivating factors of drug smuggling (see section 4.3.2).

Similar to South Africa, in 2017, Brazil was deemed the most unequal country in Latin America, with a gini-coefficient of 51,3 (Pasqual, 2019). However, wealth distribution in Brazil has showed signs of improvement with the gini-coefficient decreasing consistently since 2012. The gap between the rich and the poor in Brazil

lies in the increase in poverty, which was driven by recession and fuelled higher inequality amongst the poorest (Fundação Getulio Vargas [FGV], 2018). There are currently 23,3 million people living below the poverty line in Brazil (FGV, 2018). Furthermore, unemployment is the sole reason behind Brazilians' poverty (FGV, 2018).

Income inequality remains a serious challenge in Thailand (Khidhir, 2019) which had a gini-coefficient score of 36.4 in 2018 (The World Bank, 2018c). This made it the country with the widest income inequality in the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and one of the four worst performers on a world chart (Khidhir, 2019). According to Jitsuchon (2020), the causes of inequality in Thailand are the gaps between the rich and poor that transmit from generation to generation, disparity in education in both quality and the level completed, unequal access both to credit and the skills necessary for a modern economy, and legal discrimination.

Cabo Verde's most recent gini-coefficient value was 47,2 in 2007 (The World Bank, 2018c). Cabo Verde faces a key challenge due to the lack of employment opportunities, including for women with secondary education or higher (Barnett, 2018: 13). Overall, the rate of job creation has been lower than the growth of the economically active population (Barnett, 2018: 13).

Zimbabwe has a gini-coefficient value of 44.3 (The World Bank, 2018c) where the majority of the population is living in poverty (Financial Gazette, 2017). According to Drake (2014), 70 per cent of Zimbabweans are classified as poor. The migration of male heads-of-household has increased the number of female-led families. Considering that women usually have less exposure to economic opportunity and credit, these households are disadvantaged, as many of them are also in arid areas without irrigation (Drake, 2014).

Nigeria's gini-coefficient was scored 43,0 (The World Bank, 2018c). According to Kolawole and Omobitan (2015: 22), the level of poverty in Nigeria contradicts the country's abundant wealth. Women represent between 60 and 79 per cent of Nigeria's rural labour force. However, 79 per cent of those women are five times less likely to own their own land than men. Women are also less likely to have had a proper education (Oxfam International, 2020); over three-quarters of the poorest

women in Nigeria have never been to school and 94 per cent of them are illiterate (Oxfam International, 2020).

In 2004, Mozambique had a gini-coefficient value of 54,0 that shows that it has large levels of inequality (The World Bank, 2016). The absence of inclusive development policies has affected the growth of shared prosperity that requires a growing economy that provides more opportunities to the lower echelons of the income distribution scale compared to the rest of the population (The World Bank, 2016). Mozambique also faces the challenges of low economic conditions in comparison with the non-poor, as well as the lack of access to education as elements that contribute to the generational transmission of poverty (The World Bank, 2016).

In 2016, Malawi had a value of 44,7 on the gini index (The World Bank, 2018c). According to Mariotti (2018: 5), Malawi is among the poorest countries in the world with 70 per cent of people living on less than \$1.90 a day. The low level of economic growth has left the nation's finances constantly limited where economic disparity creates inequalities between men and women (Mariotti, 2018: 5). Malawi is one of the worst countries in the world for women and girls and has dropped 20 places in the latest Global Gender Gap rankings (Mariotti, 2018: 8).

In 2018, Paraguay had a value of 46.2 (The World Bank, 2018c). Moya (2017) states that Paraguay is a lower-middle class country with a population of 6.6 million people. The population is largely concentrated in the eastern region. In 2009, a third of the population was living below the poverty line and nearly 20 per cent of the population lived in severe poverty (Moya, 2017). Over the years, however, the agricultural sector, which is where the economic potential of the country originates, has developed rapidly (Moya, 2017). This is because of high international food prices and demands for farm and livestock products. Nonetheless, there are still high levels of inequality in the country (Moya, 2017). About half of the rural population is living in poverty, and women and indigenous people are most affected (Moya, 2017).

In 2008, Angola scored a value of 55,0 on the gini index (The World Bank, 2018c). Poverty in Angola is severe and gendered. The country ranks as the 150th of 188 countries in United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Index (UNDP, 2016: 271). The country's gender inequality index also puts it as

number 150 out of 188 countries (UNDP, 2016: 212). In most main indicators, the rural population is worse off, such as labour participation, access to health and education, child mortality rates and access to social services (Strønen & Nangacovie, 2018: 5). Increasing poverty levels and severe gaps in the coverage of basic needs impact women more significantly than men, evidenced by the high maternal mortality rates, high infant mortality rates and lack of pre-natal care combined with high fertility rates (Strønen & Nangacovie, 2018: 5). Moreover, rural women have a weaker economic and political status than their urban counterparts do, and traditional legislation weakens women's property or land rights (Strønen & Nangacovie, 2018: 5).

Congo has a 48,9 gini-coefficient score (The World Bank, 2018b). Congo has a population of 77 per cent living in extreme poverty on less than \$1.90 a day (The World Bank, 2018b). The most recent World Bank estimates put the extreme poverty rate in the Congo at 73 per cent in 2018, one of the highest in sub-Saharan Africa (The World Bank, 2018b).

The discussion above reveals a similarity between South Africa and other countries from which participants in this study come, in terms of the inequality gap between the rich and the poor; and gender inequality. These factors were mentioned by participants as some of the motivating factors for their taking part in drug smuggling.

Historically, women in South Africa and internationally have been oppressed and regarded as unequal in social and power relations as opposed to their male counterparts. The core focus of critical criminology is inequality, as discussed by Vold in sub-section 2.7.1. An unequal society places low-income individuals near high-income individuals who have things that are worth taking. The female drug mules from this study are from low-income societies where inequality can cause poverty and disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, and be a hurdle in combating unemployment.

The Marxist feminism theory highlights that the cause of crime is found in the structure of an unequal society where women in economically weak positions can easily be exploited and influenced by drug trafficking syndicates (Cote, 2002: 232). A majority of the female drug mules were disadvantaged in both the formal economy

and labour market. Some participants were motivated by their role as a parent and were responsible for caring for their families. As a result, a lack of resources increases chances of poverty and is a hurdle in the realisation of social and economic rights. The women in this study were from poor residential areas characterised by sub-standard and poor housing conditions, limited employment opportunities, inadequate access to health care facilities and low standards of education. The lack of the afore-mentioned basic needs is presumed to have played a role in causing respondents to commit the crime of smuggling drugs. In addition, poverty remains a persistent contributing factor to gender inequality, particularly for women residing within rural areas. As discussed in the literature by Burke (2003: 173) under sub-section 2.7.1, critical criminology acknowledges that the lowest section of the working class, especially women who are poor, single parents and socially isolated, are seen to be most likely to be oppressed and exploited as seen in the findings of this study. Furthermore, the feminist theory shares the views of critical criminology with regards to women being structurally disadvantaged as discussed in sub-section 2.7.1.1. Liberal feminist theory emphasises the transformation of women's roles in society and their rights. In addition, crimes committed by women are as a result of social oppression and financial dependency on men or social grants provided for by the government, as reported by some participants in this study. The above-mentioned reasons may play a contributory role in women becoming victims of exploitation such as drug smuggling and becoming drug mules.

Women have traditionally been oppressed and considered as unequal to men. As a result, the disparity between men and women, in terms of social and power relations, has created significant economic, political and social differences. Women and girls from marginalised communities are still tremendously affected by poverty. Men still earn double as compared to women on an annual basis. Motives for this include lack of representation of women in the workplace and a lack of access to alternative streams of income (South African Human Rights Commission [SAHRC], 2017: 14). Even though the percentage of women in the workplace is increasing (StatsSA, 2019: 1), transformation is slow. Women continue to face challenges directed at the status of women, even in political and economic organisations, and are expected to manage the roles, duties and responsibilities of their position in a

masculine environment (Mallicoat, 2019: 6).

According to the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC, 2017: 9), Gender equality may be considered in a 'formal' or 'substantive' context. Formal gender equality applies to laws and legislation that tend to be gender-neutral by treating everyone in the same way, but such laws and regulations may simply exacerbate existing gender inequalities, as they do not seek to alter an unequal status quo. Structural or structural disparities – that is, unequal systems, hierarchies and relationships of power that shape our society and economy and oppress women and people – are therefore left unaddressed (SAHRC, 2017: 9) whereas substantive equality<sup>1</sup> or equity<sup>2</sup> aims towards achieving equal results by treating individuals and groups differently (SAHRC, 2017: 9). Due to the lack of avenues for income, female drug mules who were born into female-headed households were more dependent on social grants for their children or their parents' pension funds. The poverty gap (the gap from the poverty line) and the intensity of poverty measures have been greater for female-headed households compared to male-headed households (StatsSA, 2019b). The vulnerabilities experienced by respondents included lower educational achievements, a lack of basic needs such as food and shelter, a higher rate of unemployment, as well as the percentage of female-headed households, may result in criminal behaviour. The feminist theory corroborates with the findings that state that female-headed households and "feminisation poverty" has led women to engage in economically related crimes such as drug trafficking (see literature under sub-section 2.7.1.1 by Reckdenwald & Parker, 2008: 5). The hope for those living in female-headed households of accessing opportunities, such as education or basic services, remains slim. Furthermore, the importance of social empowerment, as stated by the feminist theory under sub-section 2.7.1.1, needs to be available in order to provide equality for women (White et al, 2017: 138). Education will enhance the ability of women and provide economic opportunities therefore, the state has a

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<sup>1</sup> Equality as defined by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (2018) as fair opportunity provided to every individual to make most of their lives and talents and that no one should have poorer life chances because of the way they were born, where they come from, what they believe, or whether they have a disability.

<sup>2</sup> Equity refers to the provision of varying levels of support – based on specific needs – to achieve greater fairness of treatment and outcomes (Longley 2019).



responsibility to provide access to quality education. The liberal theory, as seen in the literature by Enyew and Mihrete (2018: 62) under 2.7.1.1.1, asserts that governments should provide all individuals with equal resources. Although men and women are different, women are not inferior. Nienaber and Moraka (2016: 146) state that the liberal feminist theory emphasises that women should have the same rights as men, including education and employment opportunities.

Individuals who live in poverty-stricken regions often do not have access to clean running water, adequate education, shelter, health care or food. Alongside the absence of fundamental basic human needs, is the instability of life and income. These components make an intricate connection between poverty and drug smuggling (Montilla, 2019: 1). While poverty does not cause crime, as stated in the literature by Tibbetts and Hemmens (2015: 360) under section sub-section 2.7.1.1.2, it is one of the many contributing factors that a number of the participants in this study reported as their motivation to smuggle drugs.

Fleetwood (2014b: 16) suggests that the choices made by women are not limited exclusively by material social conditions (poverty and single parenthood), but also by their sense of self as women. In other terms, becoming parents, sisters, mothers, and daughters formed their narratives for their participation in smuggling drugs. Social dynamics thus play out in the material circumstances of women and also in their ongoing narrative sense of self, which is formed by cultural perspectives regarding what women should be doing and how they should act. Thus, narrative theory provides new methods to think about how to respond to women's offences and engagement with both material and political inequalities.

#### **4.3.2 Employment and financial status**

According to Montilla (2019: 1), individuals who live in low-salary networks regularly face more difficulties than the individuals who live in progressively agreeable monetary circumstances. Some (n=8) of the research participants reported that they grew up in poverty stricken families while others (n=4) were raised in stable homes where basic human needs were accessible and provided by both parents. However, some of the latter interviewees indicated that circumstances changed in their adult

lives and they were faced with challenges, such as unemployment, that put them into a very low- or no-income bracket. On the other hand, those who grew up in poverty did not have opportunities, such as employment, available for them to improve their lives, as elaborated in the following verbatim statement:

*“When the money my father left us finished, we were okay because my mom was still alive, and my older brother was also working. But as soon as my mother passed away, I seriously saw that I had to help around the house because my younger brother was going to matric, so I looked for jobs a lot because I had matric. That didn’t work out so that’s when I spoke to my friends about smuggling the drugs” (Participant 03).*

Even though Participant 07 stated that unemployment did not motivate her to smuggle drugs, she indicated that perhaps her life would have turned out better had she found a job after completing matric:

*“I got very demotivated because I tried looking for a job when I moved out of home. I didn’t want to just sit and do nothing with my boyfriend but that’s what ended up happening. I was around the wrong people and those people made sure I was good. Even, for a while, I forgot my problems. Maybe if I got a job earlier or went to school, I wouldn’t be here now.”*

*“That guy who recruited me wasn’t lying when he said South Africa doesn’t have jobs. It’s true because when I lost my job as a cashier at the supermarket where I was working before, I looked for a very long time [for a new job]. You don’t understand. It was even hard because they want school now and they don’t look at your experience. I had to make a CV because that’s what they wanted. Everywhere I looked, they want a CV, but I didn’t know what it was, and I don’t know computers so that’s why I ended up with the drugs” (Participant 09).*

*“I finished my grade 12 but there was no money for university, so I had to find a job to help my mom because I was the first born but that was for a short time. Even when I got older, I never had a real job, all of them were short. I used to survive with my children’s grant. That’s not a way to live life because even the grant is not enough so when the lady told me about the drugs, I did it because it was a lot of money and I was going to save it to make our life better” (Participant 16).*

*"I was born in Malawi but I came to South Africa in 1994 with my husband for his work, then I went back home after my husband passed away. That's when things started to go wrong. I didn't work for long in South Africa because of the work visa. When he died [her husband], I had to go back home with my children, I couldn't live here anymore. I didn't have a real job when I went home, and it was difficult to find a job [in South Africa] because I am foreign" (Participant 20).*

Even though some of the participants in this study were employed at the time of their arrest (see sub-section 4.2.1.6), others reported that the compensation they received at their place of work was not enough to support them and their families hence they were open to finding other ways to make money. Another reason that led some research participants to smuggle drugs was for money to start a business or to invest in their existing businesses, as mentioned below:

*"I also wanted my own business. I was selling clothes and I was making money, so I quit my job at the shop" (Participant 01).*

*"I wanted money for my business and to make a better life for me and my children so I can support them because they were taken away from me" (Participant 14).*

*"To be honest, my job was good. I was working at the hospital and my two salons, but I wanted more money so that I can use it to invest in my businesses so that I can quit my hospital job. So, when I realised that the jobs the other girls were doing was easy and it was quick money, I asked that guy if can do it too" (Participant 19).*

Another common reason for smuggling drugs was the need for money to invest or start a business. Campbell (2008: 72) explains that empowerment and status achieved through drug trafficking is a contributing factor for being involved in the crime even though the sizeable amount of money may be temporary. The Marxist theory views crimes that are committed by lower class individuals are a result of economic and social motivations (see section 2.7.1.1.2). Crimes committed by the "powerless" are related to efforts to increase or supplement their income relative to survival levels. In other instances, "powerless" people may represent antisocial behaviour that is connected to various types of sociocultural exclusion

Participant 17 indicated that, even though money was her key motive to smuggle drugs, the social pressure for a good lifestyle, such as living in a beautiful home, providing her children with items they wanted or wearing clothing that she considered expensive, also contributed to her decision, she indicated:

*“I was feeling like my life was going nowhere, I had too many problems and not enough money to live. Also, the people around me were living a nice life and I also wanted to have that.”*

While literature covers a wide range of reasons why females take part in the smuggling of drugs, Burt and Simons (2013:1330) are of the opinion that most criminological theories (also a critique of theories used in this study) pay attention primarily to the material benefits of crime while ignoring other economic motivations such as status, respect and self-esteem (described by Participant 17 above) from committing crime. For this participant, her primary motive was to obtain money in order to fulfil a need to earn respect or status, self-esteem and to live a “nice life” as defined by capitalism, an economic system that perpetuates inequality. The Marxist theory is based on the view that capitalism is a system that forces a person to stay in the social bracket that he/she was born into. The majority of the participants in this study are from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds and grew up in poverty with no or limited opportunities, such as good education or employment, available to them to improve their lives. According to the Marxist theory, rich people need poor people so that the upper class can thrive. Drug trafficking syndicates regard drug mules as a lower class that will remain financially disadvantaged (see section 4.5.2.3). The major cause of poverty according to the Marxist view is inequality or uneven distribution of wealth and income.

#### **4.3.3 Involvement by deception**

Involvement by deception, as a motivating factor for taking part in drug smuggling, was reported by eight participants in this study. This supports the statement made by Fleetwood (2010: 72) that involvement by deception lures drug mules into committing crime. However, claims of being “set up” are often met with suspicion since they are virtually impossible to prove in a legal sense (Fleetwood, 2014a: 82). These findings are articulated below in the following verbatim responses stated by

some respondents when the researcher asked if they were aware that they were smuggling drugs:

*"I thought I was going overseas to work on business with the lady that was helping me. I did not know it would put me here"* (Participant 01).

*"I was going to start a new job. I needed better income and I didn't mind going for a few years because I knew my family will be supported. It was very disappointing to know that it wasn't going to be like that. He lied to me. I was very sad and angry at the same time"* (Participant 02).

*"Not at all. And that's what makes me so angry. I am here for something I didn't know; I didn't wake up saying I'm going to do this. I didn't have the choice. It's not fair"* (Participant 06).

*"No. I only know when I got to the other city. I thought I was going for air hostess job, you know"* (Participant 10).

*"I thought I was getting a job in Brazil, I didn't know about the drugs until I got there"* (Participant 12).

*"No, the environment was so friendly and welcoming. I didn't suspect anything until the last day I was there"* (Participant 14).

*"They said I will go get the material from Nigeria and Brazil from the supplier. The drugs? I really didn't know. I was so stupid. I didn't suspect a thing"* (Participant 18).

*"I didn't know I was smuggling drugs. I saw the business [selling clothes] as a way to make money for when I couldn't find domestic work"* (Participant 08).

The verbatim responses corroborate the literature in this study (see sub-section 2.2.1) which states that women who are arrested for participating in the illicit drug trade lack education and economic opportunities (UNODC, 2018: 26). Drug trafficking is conducted by individuals on the edges of society and those of low financial status. The respondents in this study are single mothers who head households and take care of and provide for their families. Artz et al (2012: 101-102) and Van Heerden (2014: 123) state that South African women experience

vulnerabilities relating to structural poverty which was evident amongst the participants in this study.

As explained by Barlow and Weare (2019: 95), Bailey (2013: 117) and Fleetwood (2010: 8), economic circumstances and significant life events are motivating factors for committing criminal activities (see sub-section 2.2.1, 2.3 and 2.3.1) which match the findings of this study. The literature in section 2.2.1 states that women are prime targets for male drug dealers who exploit their poverty and their fear of consequences for noncompliance. Sumter et al (2016: 7) emphasise how women are motivated by economic gain to escape poverty, as depicted in the findings of this study. Moreover, financial hardship for women in these societies results in a greater number of chances for unlawful work than for lawful work.

The findings in this study do not confirm the findings of the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation (2003: 37), UNODC (2018: 29) and Geiger (2006: 586) which state that women become drug mules because of the involvement of their male partners in the activity, past exploitation, abuse as a child or in their youth, and individuals who are criminally disposed. However, economic circumstances and significant life events, such as losing custody of their children, were factors which contributed to some respondents' participation in drug smuggling. Another motivating factor, which was not common in this study but was reported by one participant and by Fleetwood (2010: 9), was the free travelling experience.

A common theme that motivated female drug mules is money and socio-economic circumstances, which corroborates with the literature used in this study and other research findings conducted by national and international researchers.

#### **4.4 RECRUITMENT PROCESS**

According to Heaven (2009: 1), individuals are generally recruited into being drug mules in different ways depending on the country and whether they are professional couriers or simply drug mules. This section discusses how the participants in this study were recruited as drug mules as well as the instructions given to mules by their recruiters.

When the researcher asked the research participants how they were recruited into smuggling drugs, seven participants (Participants 02, 05, 06, 10, 11, 12 and 20) indicated that they were offered false job offers abroad and four participants (Participants 01, 08, 14 and 18) reported that they thought they were travelling abroad for businesses purposes. One participant (Participant 07) stated that she was recruited through coercion. Four participants (Participants 03, 04, 13 and 19) indicated that they volunteered, and four participants (Participants 09, 15, 16 and 17) stated that they were offered the opportunity to smuggle drugs.

Participant 01 and 14 reported that they thought they were travelling overseas to receive stock for their businesses:

*“Someone I knew said they have a job for me in South Africa. A lady I knew always came to the shop and we became friends. She told me about her business of selling cheaper clothes from China and Angola and she was making money. So I told her I also wanted my own business and she said she will help me. She helped me at first, I was selling clothes and I was making money, so I quit my job at the shop. She would always go to other countries [the friend] and I asked her to go with her one day. That day came but she said she can’t go with me so I must go and meet her boss in Angola to get the cheap clothes, so I said yes” (Participant 01).*

*“A lady I knew told me about how she got money for her business. She said to me that I can also do the same because I was also trying to do business on the side. So then, she said she would get money from her work trip in Brazil to help with her business. I said to her I’m interested, and she must introduce me to her friend. I met the guy, I told him my plans and he said he can help me. So, then he told me that I will meet a lady in Brazil who will give me the stock for my business and for him also. He said it was a lot so I must carry light clothes” (Participant 14).*

Participants 02, 06 and 12 reported that they were offered false job opportunities abroad, as stipulated in the verbatim responses below:

*“A Chinese man would come to my work for a massage with his wife like twice a week. He was a very nice person. He talked to everyone. We would also talk, not like friends, but I knew that he was a businessman and he owned a hair salon*

*around the area. He asked me about my future and if I wanted to massage forever. That's when he told me he's opening a business in another country. I knew him for three months and he offered me a job. He was opening a massage business and he wanted me to be the manager because I was good at my job and I worked there for long" (Participant 02).*

*"Someone I knew in Brazil told me about an opportunity, but it was temporary, like once off to do in South Africa. He had small businesses, but he didn't have a team that he worked with. He asked me to go with him to South Africa as an administrator when he was pitching to some investors in South Africa. I said yes because it's a job I could do" (Participant 06).*

*"My friend's husband offered me a part time job in Brazil after he helped me pay back my bank loan so when I did the job, I could pay him back and take some of the money for me. It was a lot of money to me" (Participant 12).*

Participants 03, 04, 13 and 19 reported that they were not recruited. However, they knew drug dealers/recruiters and they voluntarily agreed to smuggle drugs in exchange for money:

*"I had a friend that lived in the city that I would always hang out with. She was married to a Nigerian man. One day, I was at her house and I overheard her and her husband talking about drugs, the business how the guy that was supposed to smuggle the drugs wasn't available. Then the next day I had a conversation with my friend about what I heard. She told me that the guy who was supposed to smuggle the drugs for them from Brazil can't do the drop and that's when I asked how it's done and I told her I could do that after she told me the process" (Participant 03).*

*"I asked my friend how she was making money because she didn't have a real job, but she seemed to be doing fine in her life. When I asked her, she told me the truth, she was smuggling drugs as well. I ended up telling her that I was willing to do the same in order to get money to support me and my children" (Participant 04).*

*"I had a boyfriend and I liked things. I liked to go out and buy nice things when he gave me money and I think he knew that. So, he offered me a travelling opportunity and I took it. He said I must just go get something for him and I could*



*buy some stuff for myself when I am there. I knew that he was a drug dealer”* (Participant 13).

*“A man I knew from my salon, he would sometimes supply hair and hair products, asked me to recruit some ladies who needed money to smuggle the drugs and he would give me \$1000 for getting those ladies. It seemed like easy money because the ladies that smuggled the drugs would get more than \$1000 so then I asked if I could also do it for more money”* (Participant 19).

Contrary to popular belief that female drug mules participate in the trafficking of drugs through coercion and deception Participants 03, 04, 13 and 19 admitted that they took part through their own free will. This finding refutes findings from most research studies on women’s pathway to criminality which depict women as victims (as witnessed throughout the literature chapter) and not willing participants in criminal activities. Moreover, undertakings by the four participants demonstrate that women do exercise agency when choosing to commit crime regardless of whether the impetus is a need for money or to gain social status.

Participants 09, 16 and 17 reported that when they were looking for employment, they came across individuals who offered them jobs as drug mules as stated in the verbatim responses below:

*“A guy who saw me looking for a job told me there are no jobs in South Africa and he could help me ... like I said, I was in town looking for a job. And then I went into a food store to get something to drink. I would always go there because I knew the people. He came to me and greeted and asked me if I found a job yet (he heard me talk to the lady in the shop that I was struggling to find a job). I told him no and that’s when he said I won’t find one because South African doesn’t have any jobs. He said he could help me, but he wasn’t promising anything. He asked for my numbers and I gave them to him. He called later that day and told me where I should meet him. I met him. We went to his flat, which was close to the shop”.*

The researcher asked the participant if she was not scared or hesitant to go to the recruiters flat especially because she was not familiar with him, she replied,

*“Ya, a little bit, but I needed to find out what the job was, I was desperate and he*

*wanted to show me” (Participant 09).*

*“When I was looking for work, a lady who used to come near my house told me about how I can make money. She explained to me that it is transporting drugs” (Participant 16).*

*“My neighbour told me about a job she does by travelling I asked her to help me. She helped me and the guy explained to me that I will be smuggling the drugs, but he didn’t put it in a way like it can be dangerous, he didn’t say that. If someone told me that I can stay in jail for so long, I wouldn’t do it, I didn’t know” (Participant 17).*

According to Fleetwood (2014b: 70), drug smuggling is organised by mutual or informal connections (in particular kinship, ethnic networks and friendship) rather than hierarchical, formal crime groups. Such relations form the basis for temporary criminal collaborations, rather than purposive, organised collaborations. The verbatim responses from the research participants in this study revealed that the recruitment of a drug mule can indeed be through personal contact by a familiar associate, a friend, an acquaintance or a stranger as discussed in literature by Martel (2013: 20) and Van Heerden (2014: 2) in section 2.5. Thereafter, Van Heerden (2014: 2) adds that a drug mule is informed that she will be smuggling drugs or is offered employment or a vacation opportunity which also includes monetary payment.

In relation to the recruitment process of a drug mule, the risk factors of being recruited as a drug mule are discussed below.

#### **4.4.1 Risk factors of being recruited as a drug mule**

In a study conducted by Fleetwood (2014a: 77) in Ecuador, recruiters target women to exploit their poverty and naivety. Heaven (2009: 1) notes that women are predominately recruited as drug mules because they are more vulnerable to being recruited than men since they tend to be the primary caregivers and they are the ones that worry about feeding their families, providing shelter and paying school fees for their children. The postmodern feminist theory also emphasises that the role of a woman is connected to social norms whereby a woman is defined as vulnerable,

weaker and subordinate to men hence they are targeted for exploitation. Furthermore, the postmodern theory adds that the “powerless” are constituted by language and that change lies in analysing the language that constructs social relationships such as women being caregivers, nurturers and the weaker vessel as discussed under sub-section 2.7.1.1.4.

The abovementioned statement correlates with the motives provided by the research participants (see section 4.3), stating that the need to take care and financially provide for their children and families was a motivating factor for them.

During fieldwork for the current research, the researcher asked the interviewees why they thought that they were recruited as drug mules. This was done in order to establish possible risk factors of being recruited as a drug mule. Even though four respondents willingly volunteered, and four respondents were offered the job to smuggle drugs and willingly accepted (as discussed in the preceding section), half of the participants (n=10) reported that they thought they were recruited because their desperation for money was evident to their recruiters. Even though women who come from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds and struggle financially are most targeted, Fleetwood (2014a: 76) adds that the age, being well travelled, having a passport, speaking a foreign language, and being socially connected were much more significant. Participant 10 also stated that her beauty also played a role in her recruitment:

*“I think because of my beauty... I looked a certain way, I think they were looking for someone vulnerable, a person who’s not obvious [to the police] you know. I was young and very blind [naïve]”.*

Participants added that as they have discussions with other offenders who are incarcerated for the same crime, they are able to reflect back to the occurring events that led to their arrest and have become more aware that their vulnerability was exploited. The statement below made by one of the research participants summarises this:

*“I worked closely with my boss and he had another Nigerian guy he worked with. They recruited young girls, girls that didn’t work or like needed money. Girls that were like me. They would come to the flat sometimes and we would talk, that’s*

*how I know*" (Participant 10).

Furthermore, as discussed in the literature by Ford (2003: 2) under sub-section 2.2.1, women who are recruited into smuggling drugs are typically poor, desperate for money and are single mothers from disadvantaged urban and rural groups; most have no prior criminal history or any comprehension of the implications. This statement verifies the findings of this study as most of the participants reported that they had financial challenges, are single mothers and had no criminal record prior to their arrest (see sub-sections 4.2.2.4, 4.2.3.3 and 4.3.1).

## **4.5 MODUS OPERANDI**

This section explores the modus operandi used by drug mules to smuggle drugs, the type and quantity of the smuggled drugs, the destination of the drugs, the payment they received and other associates involved. Other relevant factors are the respondent's preparation for smuggling drugs in reference to travelling arrangements and instructions provided by the recruiter.

Table 4.4 contains a summary of the methods of smuggling which are discussed in more detail in this section.

**Table 4.4: Methods used to smuggle drugs**

<b>PARTICIPANT</b>	<b>DRUG TYPE</b>	<b>QUANTITY OF DRUGS</b>	<b>CONCEALMENT OF THE DRUGS</b>
<b>01</b>	Cocaine	Unknown	Hidden in clothing
<b>02</b>	Heroin	4kg	Luggage
<b>03</b>	Cocaine	10kg*	Luggage
<b>04</b>	Heroin	2kg	Body concealment
<b>05</b>	Cocaine	93 bullets/ 10g	Swallowed
<b>06</b>	Cocaine	Unknown	Luggage
<b>07</b>	Cocaine	75 bullets	Swallowed
<b>08</b>	Cocaine	95 bullets/ 10g	Swallowed
<b>09</b>	Cocaine	10kg, 1kg, 5kg and 1kg	Swallowed, luggage and body concealment
<b>10</b>	Cocaine	3.8kg*	Body concealment
<b>11</b>	Cocaine	6kg*	Luggage
<b>12</b>	Cocaine	1kg	Swallowed
<b>13</b>	Cocaine	1kg	Hidden in clothes and shoes
<b>14</b>	Cocaine	9.5 kg	Body concealment
<b>15</b>	Cocaine	2 kg	Luggage
<b>16</b>	Cocaine	2.3 kg	Hidden in package
<b>17</b>	Cocaine	5 kg	Luggage
<b>18</b>	Cocaine	3.5 kg	Luggage
<b>19</b>	Cocaine	2.8 kg	Body concealment
<b>20</b>	Heroin	6.5 kg	Luggage

*Note: The kilograms of drugs marked with an asterisk symbolise the amount of drugs the participants stated they smuggled. However, the same amount was not accounted for during trial (see sub-section 4.5.2.4).*

#### 4.5.1 Roles in the drug trafficking network

Individuals in the drug trafficking network operate in different roles. The EMCDDA (2012: 8) identified the roles of drug traffickers:

**The organiser/manager:** The organiser oversees the importation of drugs from a foreign country or drug-manufacturing region.

**Importation auxiliary:** Supports or promotes the import and coordination of the courier.

**Courier:** The courier physically smuggles the drugs (using various methods).

According to the roles provided by the EMCDDA (2012: 8), the research participants in this study were all couriers. They smuggled drugs in various ways: swallowing capsules also referred to as “bullets”, concealed on the body and clothes and hidden in luggage. The respondents in this study explained to the researcher the events that led to smuggling the drugs:

*“I left home, going to Brazil. When I got to Brazil, I lived in a hotel by myself while I was waiting for the place I was going to live in. But then the ladies told me that the main offices of the company are in South Africa and I need to go there for an introduction since I’m going to be the manager” (Participant 02).*

*“My friend’s husband ... well, ex-friend, had to get a passport for me because I didn’t have one. But because it was an emergency, they will have to bribe someone to get me the passport in a week. I got my passport then they bought me a one-way plane ticket ... and I was ready to leave that Friday. When I got to Brazil, my friend’s friend fetched me at the airport, and we went to the apartment where I would be staying. I spoke to the Nigerian guys very often. We spoke about life in Brazil and the possibility of doing this again, the process was very easy you know. They would also come check on me now and again to bring me food. I stayed there for three weeks because it was carnival festival and that would be used as a reason for my trip to Brazil if anyone were to ask. I also got money to shop around when I was there” (Participant 03).*

*“When I got to Brazil, one lady fetched me at the airport and took me to a hotel where she said I’ll be staying with another woman. She seemed very nice and*

*talked about Brazil a lot. On the second day, the lady who fetched me at the airport and one guy told me that I would be smuggling drugs to Uganda and I was scared because I know drugs are dangerous. I didn't want to, but they told me that it won't look right if I got back home with no money that I promised my family. I was scared because the man looked scary. I asked the lady I was staying with if she did this before and she said yes" (Participant 05).*

*"He said that the investors booked him business class and he went to South Africa before me. I took economy and I went after. The meeting was for three days. He then called me before I left and said he forgot his bag with his suits in his house and I should go fetch them for him so I can give it to him when we meet when I land" (Participant 06).*

*"They paid for all the costs. From the accommodation to the flight, everything. I was instructed to pack light clothes like I was going on holiday and when I get to Brazil, I take a cab to this hotel in Sao Paolo and the drug dealer in Brazil would meet me there to tell me how everything goes. So, I did that, I asked around where to find taxis and I got myself to the hotel and everything was booked. I get there, I order room service and I slept. I stayed there for five days and the guy only came the next day of my arrival just to see if I arrived. So, on the Wednesday, two ladies came with that guy to show me how the drugs are swallowed" (Participant 07).*

*"The guy [recruiter] arranged the passport for me, it was very quick. Usually it takes a month; I got it in one week. So, from my city, I had to go to Ciudad del Este (CD East) to meet a Nigerian guy at the bus stop then, from there to the Nigerian guy's house. His family was there, the wife and children so I felt very safe. The wife was nice. Then the next day another woman came and then I started to worry about what was happening. I spoke to the lady because the Nigerian guy wasn't talkative. The lady told me directly that we are transporting drugs. But she said that I must not worry because the boss will protect us if anything happens. I got scared and I told the lady and the Nigerian guy that I didn't want to do this anymore and I wanted to go home, he didn't want. I called the guy from the restaurant and he wasn't answering his phone" (Participant 10).*

*"It was my first time out of the country and in a plane... I told them I don't know other countries and I was scared to get lost and they said I must just follow the*

*instructions and another lady will be there to fetch me at the airport. They made the passport for me and bought my ticket. I get to Brazil then when I get there I wait for a lady, she knows me. When I get there, we go to her house, like a small nice house and I stayed there for two weeks shopping around for materials and clothes with her. And then when I come back, I just come back with an extra bag with other stuff for the Brazilian guy. I asked what the other stuff in the bag and they said it was clothes and some shoes, so I believe her. I didn't have a reason for her to lie to me" (Participant 18).*

*"I got booked into the same hotel as the other women in India, but we were in different rooms, I shared with a Nigerian lady. Me and five other ladies were told what we were going to do, and our tickets were bought, and everything was being organised. But we didn't go at the same time. I was in the hotel for one week and the Nigerian lady left before me" (Participant 20).*

During fieldwork, the researcher came to the finding that most of the women in this study (n=18) did not have any opinion over the processes and were not able to negotiate their conditions. From the interviewees' verbatim responses, it is evident that the most common procedures are for recruiters to handle the process of getting a passport or a visa for the drug mule. The paperwork is completed in a few days to a week. When the participants were asked how their recruiters were able to get their documents and all the other necessary paperwork for their trip, they were unsure and stated that the recruiters have connections and that they do not work alone.

Participant 03 was bought a one-way ticket to Brazil by her recruiters. According to literature by Meehan et al (2015: 5) under sub-section 2.4.2.2, a one-way ticket indicates that the individual may not know when he/she will return. Once the flight logistics are completed, the female drug mule is booked into a hotel or an apartment to live by themselves or with other women for a few days to a few weeks before their trip to smuggle drugs. This could be contributed to the recruiter wanting to build trust and making the drug mule as comfortable as possible to ensure cooperation when it is time to transport the drugs. However, Participants 09 and 13 reported that staying at an accommodation for more than two days can mean that drug dealers are waiting for the drugs to arrive from their supplier or "business" associates so the mule can be taught how to smuggle them or, in some instances, to avoid suspicion when customs



officials view their passports. It was explained by the two participants that short trips raise suspicions in comparison to longer trips such as a week or two. Thereafter, when a drug mule is supposed to “start her new job”, she is told the real purpose of her trip. Later, the female drug mule is taught through demonstration how to conceal or swallow the drugs and how to act at the airport. The planning, control and coordination of drug smuggling is done by drug trafficking syndicates that make use of female drug mules. The participants’ verbatim responses were similar with reference to purchasing of tickets for the drug mules, booking for accommodation and providing the drug mules with “pocket money” during their stay (see sub-sections 4.5.1, 4.5.2.3 and 4.5.3). Meehan et al (2015: 5) (see sub-section 2.4.2.2) also highlighted ticket characteristics that did not correlate with those of the research participants in this study, such as walk-up purchases, unusual reservations and paying cash. In this study, all of the drug mules’ tickets and arrangements were done by their recruiters. The abovementioned elements that are discussed in this study are also aligned with the definition of transnational organised crime provided by the United Kingdom Home Office (2011) as previously discussed in sub-section 1.4.8.

#### **4.5.2 Methods used by female drug mules to smuggle drugs**

The methods used by the interviews are discussed below.

- **Swallowing capsules or “bullets”**

Five interviewees in this study (participant 05, 07, 08, 09 and 12) carried drugs in their bodies by swallowing them in capsules also referred to as “bullets”. This method is also referred to as “body packaging”. Gregory and Tierney (2002: 2) define body packing as the practice of smuggling drugs in the body in the carrier’s vagina, rectum or stomach. Geldenhuys (2016: 28) mentioned that drugs can be swallowed in latex balloons, condoms, fingers of latex gloves or special drug-filled pellets. Body packaging is a hazardous practice with medical and legal consequences in which radiologists play a key role (Sica, Guida, Brocchini, Laselli, Ladevito & Scaglione, 2014: 39). The research participants explained the process of smuggling the drugs through this method, as stated in the verbatim responses below:

*“They told me how to do it. I practiced how to swallow the cocaine bullets. It was very bad; I was vomiting because I didn’t eat, and I was scared. They said if I swallow the drugs, no one could see them. So, I did it”* (Participant 05).

*“When they gave to me and told me that I literally have to swallow them. I thought they were crazy because they were like a baby carrot. I put a little bit of oil on the bullets so it’s easier to swallow although it was difficult”* (Participant 07).

*“They just showed me how to swallow the drugs once. It’s not a very easy process. They’re like small but very thick. You have to practice for days first. You can’t just do it now and go. Your body needs to get used to it, and you must make sure you don’t eat or drink Coke or anything like that or it will burst”* (Participant 09).

According to Dorado (2005: 320), the process of ingesting can last all night. Drug mules can ingest more than 100 units with a total weight of around 900 grams. The swallowing process is slow; they have to swallow five to six units for a certain amount of time, bringing them down with silicone jelly, water or oil. The drug is compressed into a balloon, in the finger of latex gloves, or in condoms. In recent years, there has been a significant change in the methods of packaging, and professional drug smugglers may now use multi-layered, tubular latex wrapping with a smooth tight tie at each end that is less prone to breakage (Sica et al, 2014: 39). The respondents were also told that swallowing the drugs would be the “safest option” because they would not get caught even though there could be a possibility of the capsules bursting in their abdomens and causing health risks. It is also important to add that, if an individual refuses to eat in a flight (especially during a long flight), it may raise suspicions and can be flagged by the airline crew during the flight.

- **Body concealment**

Five of the interviewees (participant 04, 09, 10, 14 and 19) carried drugs strapped to their bodies. The participants stated that this method was uncomfortable and unpleasant. The drugs would be strapped onto the female’s waist area and in their underwear. Body concealment is a popular method amongst drug mules (EMCDDA 2012: 8). However, Schemenauer (2012: 83) alludes that, even though traffickers

pack drugs around women's hips and buttocks, it does not avoid suspicion from custom officials because these parts of women's bodies are under additional observation. According to Fleetwood (2014: 146), unlike packing in suitcases, body concealment is made to suit a female's body type which requires specialisation hence this role is sometimes occupied by a woman. When the researcher asked the participants who smuggled drugs through body concealment how this method was decided on, the interviewees explained:

*"I was supposed to swallow first, but I just couldn't. I tried one but they also saw I can't. So, I wore big clothes so you can't see the drugs. They put them under my breasts and in between my legs, like a pad [sanitary towel]. It was very uncomfortable because the packets were cutting into my skin. I still have scars"* (Participant 04).

*"When we were in the house two big guys (also Nigerian) came in and said we must stand up. They put the drugs on the table (already wrapped) and told us to take off our jerseys and they wrapped the drugs on your stomachs almost like a bomb, you know like on TV. They put the drugs around me with wrap and tape. It was hard for me to sit properly. That is when they gave us instructions"* (Participant 10).

*"These men I've never seen before came in and talked to the lady I was with. They took out four bricks of cocaine on the table. They told me to take off my clothes and they started taping them around my stomach. Two at the front and two at the back. They were very heavy it was even hard to sit for long in the plane"* (Participant 14).

- **Hidden in clothing or packages**

Three participants (participant 01, 13 and 16) smuggled drugs by hiding them in clothing compartments and packages. The participants were told by their recruiters to hide the drugs which were pre-packed into jackets, shoes and a duvet cover (Van Heerden 2014: 118-119). However, Participant 01 stated that her recruiters asked her what size she wore. When she received the jacket, it already had the drugs even though she was not aware. The abovementioned method may be limiting because only a certain amount of drugs can be smuggled compared to the other methods

mentioned in this section. The participants explained to the researcher in the verbatim responses below:

*"I was wearing a big jacket and the drugs were inside the jacket. The police found them in the pockets they made inside the jacket to put the drugs. They were wrapped very small and flat" (Participant 01).*

*"The guy had a new duvet cover. He put the drugs in between the duvet cover and folded it and put it back into the duvet bag to make it like I bought it in Brazil but the drugs were like small bricks, almost like a size of soap but there was a lot" (Participant 16).*

*"We would put the drugs in clothes or shoes. The last time they put 500g of cocaine on each of my FILA sneaker. They were two sizes bigger so the drugs could fit. When I walked, I was dragging my feet because they were so heavy" (Participant 13).*

*"Ok, so when I went with the guy from my salon, let's say he was my friend but not really. We get there to the place in Sao Paolo and I get ready for the airport to go to Mozambique. So, I wear big clothes because the other guy put the drugs inside my bra because I don't have big breast. So, he put them there and on my thighs. They even made like small flat bullets of drugs and wrapped them in my shorts [the hem of the shorts]. It was very uncomfortable to walk" (Participant 19).*

- **Concealed in luggage**

Nine (participant 02, 03, 06, 09, 11, 15, 17, 18 and 20) of the drug mules interviewed smuggled drugs in luggage. However, only three participants were more elaborate as stated in the responses below. The drugs inside the luggage were either in a double-lined or in a false-bottom of the participants' luggage. The respondents in this study stated that the drugs were concealed before they received them, they did not do anything except wait for their recruiters to bring them the drugs to carry.

*"In my suitcase. I didn't even know it was in there. I didn't carry a lot of bags because the meeting was not for long. So, I took one bag and my handbag to keep in the plane. Before I left Brazil, one of the ladies asked me to please go*

*with another small bag, it was like the hard suitcase. I had to give to the person who will fetch me at the airport. I asked what it was, and she said its samples of the new uniform for the Brazil and they need to approve it. I believed her and I took the bag. That's the bag the police in South Africa found the drugs. It had like another layer inside for the hiding of the drugs"* (Participant 02).

*"The guy that was doing all the arranging of my clothes and drugs in the bag packed the drugs so well in my suitcase, in very small bullets inside the linings and bricks of cocaine in the bottom of the suitcase. The suitcase was like middle size. You honestly couldn't see them at all. It's like he had a technique"* (Participant 03).

*"He [the recruiter] said that the investors booked him business class and he went to South Africa before me. I took economy and I went after. The meeting was for three days. He then called me before I left and said he forgot his bag with his suits in his house and I should go fetch them for him so I can give it to him when we meet when I land. The police found the drugs in his bag, the bag I went to fetch"* (Participant 06).

*"They put the drugs inside my suitcase, but they covered the drugs very well. They put the drugs inside the lining and the bottom of my suitcase so you couldn't see the drugs unless you ripped the bag"* (Participant 20).

According to Participants 09 and 13, drugs that are concealed in luggage or packages were also sprayed with an unknown substance, also known as a masking agent. In order to prevent sniffer dogs from detecting any cocaine or heroin (Meehan et al 2015: 7):

*"Sometimes they (drug dealers) can hide the smell of the drug by spraying something (I forgot the name of it). I know it, I used to when I was coming from Thailand. But it only means that the police dogs won't smell it. If you get caught and the police go through your bag, they will see the drugs"* (Participant 09).

*"The guy I was working with put something like spray so that the cocaine couldn't be smelled by sniff dogs"* (Participant 13).

In addition, Participant 09 was the only respondent who used all the methods mentioned above when she smuggled cocaine. Hence her responses are mentioned

several times in this section. This was because she was an experienced mule and had done it three times before she was caught.

The respondents also informed the researcher about the various instructions they were given by their recruiters to follow once they had to smuggle the drugs. For some of the drug mules, these instructions were given to them in order to look “normal” and not suspicious. The respondents had the following to say:

*“The only thing they said is I must just look normal and I will take a transit plane to South Africa that goes to Zimbabwe” (Participant 08).*

*“When I was in Ciudad del Este, the Nigerian guys told me not to talk to the other lady when we were going to the airport in Brazil, we can only talk when we get to Kempton Park (O. R. Tambo) because the police were paid. Then I walked behind her a lot because I didn’t know what I was doing everything she did, I also did because she knew. Then we got to the airport in Kempton Park, while waiting for the flight to Lusaka, I spoke to her and she ignored me. I started to worry because she was acting very funny” (Participant 10).*

*“They just told me to meet a police guy at the airport, he would know me. They said I must leave the drugs in the toilet in the plane so the police guy can get them when everyone is off the plane” (Participant 14).*

According to Fleetwood (2014a: 138), the fact that cocaine, heroin and other drugs are mostly pre-packaged when they arrive, meant that the drug mules had very little detail about what they were carrying or how much they had. Since carrying drugs required minimal participation from the mule, those who were forced preferred to carry drugs in this method.

The above-mentioned methods used by the drug mules in this study verify those provided for in the literature. Even though drug trafficking syndicates are constantly innovative when trafficking drugs through land and sea, they use common smuggling methods (through the use of drug mules) with very similar and constant methods, globally.

#### 4.5.2.1 Type and quantity of smuggled drugs

The most common types of drugs that were carried by the participants in this study, as shown in Table 4.4, were cocaine and heroin. Seventeen participants (participant 01, 03, 06, 09, 11, 15, 17, 18 and 19) smuggled cocaine and three (participant 02, 04 and 20) smuggled heroin. One participant reported that cocaine is the most popular smuggled drug because “*you can manipulate cocaine and use it to make other drugs such as nyaope.*”<sup>3</sup> *It makes a lot of money.*” Kaplan, Sogut and Yigit (2017: 2) state that cocaine is the most common drug transported by drug mules due to its high financial worth. Participant 03 reported that 10 kilograms of cocaine in its purest form had a street value of R2,5 million and Participant 13 stated that the cocaine she was carrying (1kg) had a street value of R290 000. Reports however indicate that heroin is increasingly becoming the most abused illegal substance and the fastest growing drug in South Africa. Dlamini (2019) states that heroin is highly addictive and the market for heroin is increasing rapidly in South Africa because of *nyaope*.

The respondents stated that they did not know how the drugs would be concealed nor were they told about the quantity of the drugs they would be smuggling unless they asked. The quantity that mules carried was the result of several factors, including capital, technological expertise and the availability of drugs (Krebs, Costelloe & Jenks, 2000: 351).

The minimum quantity smuggled by mules in this research ranged from 10 grams to 10 kilograms (refer to Table 4.4). Participant 04 indicated that she was carrying two kilograms of cocaine and that each packet weighed at least 400 grams. According to Zaitch (2002: 149), only small quantities could be carried using capsules and those carrying drugs on the body carried one to three kilograms, whilst the largest amounts carried in suitcases is five to six kilograms. The previous statement proved to be accurate in this study as most participants who carried larger quantities of drugs smuggled them using luggage and those drug mules who carried smaller quantities

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<sup>3</sup> Nyaope is an addictive drug commonly used by the South African youth. It is usually smoked with tobacco and comprises a concoction of heroin, marijuana, strychnine (found in rat poison - a substance which thins the blood so as to increase blood circulation and thus increases the speed of intoxication) and anti-retrovirals, milk powder methamphetamine, codeine and bicarbonate of soda (Prinsloo & Oven 2015: 43).

used body concealment or swallowing to carry the drugs. As previously mentioned, five participants in this study smuggled drugs through the swallowing method. However, only three participants disclosed the number of capsules they swallowed. Participant 05 and 08 indicated that each “bullet” weighed at least 10 grams.

#### **4.5.2.2 Destination of smuggled drugs**

According to Nair (2012: 1), cocaine is frequently transported to South Africa from Brazil (as it is a drug producing country) as well as other parts of South America. As a result, there are regular seizures of it at ORTIA, which is a focal point in drug trafficking in South Africa. Brazil was the most frequent departure/transit country for cocaine trafficked to Africa in the period 2010-2015 (UNODC, 2017b: 33). In agreement with the latter, it was found in this research that 17 of the 20 participants (excluding Participants 04 and 19 who are from Sao Paulo Brazil) were flown to Brazil to receive the drugs and then transported them from Brazil, Thailand or Pakistan, such as in the case of Participant 09, and then delivered them to various destinations in Congo (n=1), Uganda (n=1), Carbo Verde (n=1), Zimbabwe (n=1), Zambia (n=1), Angola (n=1), India (n=1), Mozambique (n=3) and South Africa (n=10). Half of the participants (n=10) in the study reported that they were smuggling drugs into South Africa. This may be because South African is the second biggest economy in Africa and there are more opportunities to make money here (see section 2.2).

South Africa is one of the main transit routes in Africa for drugs such as cocaine and heroin. John Wotherspoon, a Hong Kong correctional centre chaplain stated that offenders reported that smuggling drug through ORTIA is “easy” in comparison to Hong Kong, which has more sophisticated security and detection systems (Mabuza, 2020). This is because of the relative affluence of South Africa in the region, such as good infrastructure, financial services and connections to the global economy that facilitate onward shipment to destinations beyond Africa which makes it an attractive emerging market (Kibble, 1998; Parry, 1997; Simon, 1998). Furthermore, countries on the continent of Africa face a number of diverse issues with regard to drugs and crime as a result of weak border control (UNODC, 2015c: 1). According to the research participants, ORTIA is indeed a transit or transporting route from a drug



producing country such as Brazil. This corroborates with literature by Haëfele (2001: 105) and Geldenhuys (2016: 11) that states that, besides South Africa being an attractive market, after 1994, lawmakers focused on nation-building and not on fighting transnational crime. Also, the newly found democratic order led to the lifting of all sanctions against South Africa which created an unrestricted international movement of goods and people which resulted in drug syndicates taking advantage of the country's sophisticated banking system and transportation infrastructure. Literature by Grove (1995: 5) adds that high costs of living, high unemployment rates and a lack of awareness of the risks of drug abuse makes South Africa an ideal country for transnational organised crime.

Seven participants reported that South Africa was not their final destination and that they were transiting via South African when they were arrested. Even though some respondents did not know why they had to take transit flights, one respondent stated that her direct flight was already fully booked or, according to Participant 09,

*“Sometimes, it's to drop off the drugs here [South Africa] and then go back home empty. Sometimes the people that check your passport will ask you questions then you may not be able to leave South Africa.”*

Even though South Africa does not produce and grow most high-end drugs, it is still developed in the range of drugs available for consumption. Drug trafficking syndicates also look at the strength of law enforcement of a country and whether or not there are well-established criminal networks, thus local and international drug syndicates have exploited corrupt South African citizens, officials and porous borders in order to smuggle drugs (Van Heerden, 2014: 20; Geldenhuys, 2016: 11; Minnaar, 1999: 13).

#### **4.5.2.3 Payment received**

Caulkins, Burnett and Leslie (2009: 66) conducted in-depth research on the rate and factors that influence the payment of drug mules. Their study indicates that mules are paid primarily according to the weight and type of drugs being trafficked regardless of the process used for smuggling (Caulkins et al, 2009: 67). Lockedup (2012) indicates on its website that drug mules can earn an approximate amount of

R70 000 per parcel smuggled successfully, rendering unemployed people the most vulnerable to being recruited by drug trafficking syndicates (Van Heerden, 2014: 75). Pocket money, as it was referred to by two respondents (participant 02 and 07), was given to them by their recruiters during their stay, which ranged from USD\$300 to USD\$500, was used by the drug mules to buy new clothes and food while they waited for the day they had to board their flight to deliver the drugs. Pocket money, however, is not always guaranteed as some mules were provided with food during their stay in the country where the drugs were picked up. Three participants (participant 01, 05 and 06) did not discuss any form of payment with their recruiters; they were told that any discussions regarding payments would be made once they make their delivery. Only two participants were paid the amount they were promised after a successful trip. Participant 09 smuggled drugs four times and received payment three times as she was caught during her fourth trip. Participants 09 and 13 each received R50 000. Six participants were promised payments ranging from USD\$2 000 (R29 972) to USD\$3 000 (R44 900) dollars. Seven participants (participant 03, 07, 09, 11, 12, 13 and 16) were promised to be paid in South African Rands, ranging from R40 000 to R180 000. Participants 02 and 17 were promised 30 000 Baht (R14 318) and 100 000 Metical (R27 350). The larger the amount of drugs carried, the higher the amount of money paid to the drug mule. However, 18 participants in this study did not receive their payment because they did not make any successful trips.

#### **4.5.2.4 Other associates (corrupt police officials)**

A common theme that occurred throughout the research was the involvement of other associates in drug trafficking, specifically, the police or custom officials in South Africa. This section corroborates with the study conducted by UNODC (2015: 1), which states that corruption plays a major role in the success of drug trafficking. According to the respondents, the police officials were supposed to let them pass by customs without being detected. It is evident that corrupt contacts among law enforcement agencies contribute to the creation of organised crime syndicates and illegal activities. The other reason is that South Africa has a complicated drug-related network. Drug syndicates often adjust to law enforcement agencies' investigation techniques, making it challenging for law enforcement to deal with organised crime

(Cheteni, Mah & Yohane, 2018: 13). The participants reported that deals amongst the drug dealers and police officials do not always happen as agreed and, in some instances, police officials take the seized drugs for themselves, and the middleman (or the drug mule) faces the consequences:

*“Everything didn’t go as planned. The customs police at OR Tambo were paid out to let me pass. That’s what I know but I think things went differently. These people know how we look and our information because they’re supposed to make us pass because we all work for the same people but we don’t know which police official it is, so it’s a disadvantage for us when we get caught but the corrupt police don’t.”* (Participant 07).

*“Even these police, they are also corrupt. They took some of the drugs for themselves ... the court didn’t say I was carrying 1kg of drugs. The police took some for themselves to sell them or whatever. We worked with them all the time; I know that was the agreement sometimes. I don’t know which police it is, but I knew that every time I go, I’ll pass because I’m protected, it’s confirmed by my boss. But, like other businesses, sometimes the police and the drug dealers would fight because of business but most times everyone gets their money”* (Participant 09).

*“I had 5kg of crystal cocaine on me because it was very heavy. But then in court, I had 3,8kg. Also, now I know the police at O.R. Tambo took some for themselves because that’s how business works”* (Participant 10).

*“The stories here in prison with the other ladies are the same. If a person didn’t know how drug dealers work with police, now they do. It’s easy for these people [police officials] to take some drugs to sell to other drug dealers and leave some for court”* (Participant 10).

Corruption in the police service merely depicts the reality of a country, particularly because the wages of law enforcement officials render them prone to corruption (Engvall, 2006: 846). As previously mentioned in literature by Tibbetts and Hemmens (2015: 364) under sub-section 2.7.1.1.2, the Marxist theory emphasises that the ruling class uses the law as a tool to control and dominate people who are in disadvantaged positions in society. Dunlop (2018: 60) states that lower-level narco-corruption is also evident between the SAPS and drug dealers in Johannesburg.

This is seen by the constant drug and bribery bust of police officers. In 2017 a South African police officer was carrying cocaine bricks and was charged in Brazil. It was announced that a former police officer who enabled drug smuggling through the ORTIA will soon be sentenced in April 2019 (Nkosi, 2019).

#### **4.5.3 Arrest and imprisonment**

Thirty-two officials are dedicated fulltime to anti-narcotics work at ORTIA (a focal point of drug trafficking in South Africa) (Steinburg, 2005: 5). A 16-person team of SAPS Organised Crime Unit detectives is responsible for monitoring human drug couriers on international flights. A separate unit is responsible for the identification of drugs in shipments, foreign mail and packages sent to courier. It consists of 16 staff – eight customs agents, drawn from the Customs Anti-Smuggling Unit, and eight uniformed SAPS members, drawn from the Border Police (Steinburg, 2005: 5). The researcher contacted the security and customs department at ORTIA to obtain updated information and literature on the security detail in place at customs for drug trafficking prevention however she was not successful as a result of the secretiveness of the security detection measures.

According to Steinburg (2005: 6), the surveillance of non-narcotic contraband is a role carried out mostly by customs, rather than SAPS, on a daily basis. The Customs Anti-Smuggling Unit at ORTIA also has skilled teams assigned to counterfeit goods, cigarettes and money-laundering. The SAPS Organised Crime Unit team implements flight and passenger targeting methods when detecting human drug couriers (Steinburg, 2005: 6) as discussed in subsection 2.4.2.2.

The researcher asked the participants the following questions with regards to their arrest in order to distinguish the methods used by customs officials to detect drug mule as mentioned in the literature study conducted. This was done because the researcher was not able to conduct research with SAPS officials based at ORTIA (see study limitations, section 1.5 and Chapter Five).

- Do you think that you were set up, used as a distraction or a decoy mule?
- Why do you think you were arrested?

- When did you realise that you were going to be caught with the drugs and arrested?
- Were you given the opportunity to voice your own opinion about the event that occurred?
- Did you contact your recruiter during your trial or imprisonment?

Please note that the respondents referred to the police or customs officials as “they” in the series of verbatim responses below:

*“When I got off the plane, I took my bags to security check but then the security took long with my bags. They asked me to get out of the line. Then the security asked me what’s in my bag and I told them its shoes and clothes. Then they went with me to the offices in the airport and they tried to tell me that the scanner said I have an illegal thing in my bag. They opened my bag; my heart was beating fast because I knew something was wrong because they didn’t do this to me in Brazil. They didn’t find anything in my bag. They looked at the other bag and they found the drugs in the bag. I was very surprised, I started crying because I knew who did this to me and I was tricked. I tried to explain to the police in my language who sent me and what I was doing in South Africa, and that I didn’t come here for trouble, but no one could hear me. I waited for a translator, but he said that I will need a lawyer to fight my case because I smuggled drugs ... I asked for a phone and I put it on loudspeaker so the police and my translator can hear that I didn’t know about the drugs, and that it was a mistake, but no one answered their phones” (Participant 02).*

*“So, this is what happened: I was at O.R. Tambo. The airport is big, so I was shopping around, more like window shopping. So, while I was busy with my shopping, I’m busy walking around with my luggage and this man approaches me after I leave a shop. I thought he was the security guard because he asked to see my bag and that’s when I started to become defensive and I refused because he wasn’t wearing security uniform. When I started to say no, he called in other people and that’s when I started getting scared. When the other guy arrived, he told me that he’s a police official and I should go with them, so I don’t cause a scene, so I went with them. They asked me if I was working and what I was doing in Brazil and I answered them. When they were going to search my bag and they*

*told me that they were looking at passengers' luggage and mine looked suspicious. I knew they were lying because when I did my security check everything was fine. That's when I knew that they knew something, but I kept quiet. The sniffer dogs were brought in later and the dog came straight to my small luggage bag that I put underneath the table and they still didn't find anything. They did their searching for almost three hours. I started to feel relieved because even the dogs didn't smell anything – I don't know how. My bags were a mess because of all the searching so I thought I was going home until another security came in and spoke with his colleagues and he also did his own searching. I definitely knew that someone told them I had drugs because they were so determined to find what they were looking for. As he was about to finish, he saw white substances inside the suitcase, and he asked me what it was, and I said I didn't know. He called a colleague of his to tear open the suitcase and they saw the drugs in there. I admitted to the charges ... there was no way I could do any more lying. I did smuggle the drugs after all but it was very hard for me to accept that I was caught because there were many times where I thought they would think they made a mistake and they would let me go ... I called my friend who introduced me, and she was surprised and told me that I was not supposed to be arrested and all of that. So, I asked her to get me a lawyer, maybe it will help me to get a lower sentence. She agreed and I waited for her for a while. She didn't get back to me, so I ended up calling the Nigerian guys in Brazil, but they didn't answer at all. I didn't have a choice but to get a state lawyer, but he was so useless. He didn't look interested in my case at all. I know I was guilty, but he didn't even suggest any direction for my case, he just said I must plead guilty, so my trial doesn't take forever" (Participant 03).*

Participant 03 displayed deceptive behaviours. Meehan et al (2015: 9) highlighted under sub-section 2.4.2.2 (iv) that drug mules will take extra measures to avoid being deemed suspicious and try to fit into the environment by blending in with their surroundings. The drug mule may wander around the terminal, instead of remaining in one area.

*"I landed in South Africa, but it didn't go the way they said it would. I was supposed to meet another lady at the airport. I was going to go with her to deliver the drugs. But the one lady in police uniform and another women and man came to me and called my name. I didn't understand what they were saying because I*

*couldn't speak English. I heard my name and the police lady held me, so I went with them. When I got to the office looking place, the ladies became aggressive with me and kept on saying "drugs" when they wanted to see the drugs. I took off my clothes and they saw the drugs. I didn't have a translator, so I was in the office for long because I didn't understand but everything happened so fast ... I tried to call the lady drug dealer, but she didn't answer me, so I called my friend and she said she will try to help me, but it didn't happen. I don't know how she lives with herself" (Participant 04).*

*"When I was in South Africa, they were looking at our passports. When they got to me, I showed them, and the other policeman nodded to show that I was the person they were looking for. I can't speak English; I didn't understand so I did what they said, and I went with them. I was interviewed for more than four hours because no one could understand me, and I could not understand them. They searched me but they didn't find anything. When I thought they would let me go, the interpreter came and asked me if I was pregnant because they are going to scan me for drugs. They took me to a hospital, and they found the bullets in my body. I was talking to the interpreter because she could understand me. I told her I didn't have a choice and I needed the money, but she told me it was illegal, and I am going to prison. I cried so much, she was there for me and hugged me. And she told me to get a lawyer to help me in court. The interpreter told me that I must drink laxatives so I can take out the drugs in my body. I did that and they arrested me" (Participant 05).*

*"When I arrived in South Africa, the police were waiting for me and they asked to see my passport and asked me what I was doing in Brazil. After asking me questions, they said I must follow them to their security offices, and they looked for the drugs, but they didn't find them. I didn't confess yet that I had drugs on me just in case they weren't going to do the X-ray. So, when they got to that point, I confessed and explained to them that my family will be harmed, that's why I had the drugs. They didn't care of course, and they gave me laxative to take out the drugs. I didn't take it instead I gave one of the ladies' money to buy me milk because I'm lactose intolerant. I had to drink almost one litre of milk. I got them out, but it took hours, I'm not sure how long, maybe five hours. My body adjusted; it was very uncomfortable" (Participant 07).*

When the researcher asked Participant 07 if she was used as a decoy mule, she

said:

*"I don't think so. I think it was bad luck based on someone who decided to change the plan. I don't think I was supposed to be here, to be honest. I happen to be the middleman who got caught. Even though I got recruited by being threatened, they promised that they had police that were working with them."*

*"I arrived in South Africa and everything was fine. Then I got into the queue where they were checking our passports. So then, when I approached the lady who was scanning the passports, she looked at me and asked me what I was doing in Brazil, then I told her I was working, then she asked me to step aside. Then two people came [airport officials] and asked me to go with them. I went and they asked to see my bags. I told them I didn't have them, and they went to go get them. They didn't tell me what they were looking for until I asked. They said they were looking for drugs. I told them I didn't have drugs and they said they will see for themselves. I asked them why they chose me out of all the people in the line and they said my passport stamp dates were too close to each other. They assumed I might be smuggling drugs because I was travelling all the time ... I think I got caught the last time because we weren't thinking, and I needed money. Usually there should be three months apart before I go to another country to get drugs but this time I went after close to two months. I think that's what made them question me. So, I waited for my bags for at least 30 plus minutes. When they arrived, they started searching them and they didn't find anything until they searched the small travel bag and that's when they found them. Then one of the ladies said they must do an X-ray scan because most drug mules put the drugs inside their bodies and that's where they saw the rest of the drugs" (Participant 09).*

Participant 09 was asked by the researcher if she was given the chance to call her family to inform them about her arrest, however, she chose to inform her recruiter/boss instead:

*"I told my mom every time when I would leave that if I don't come back then I'm arrested. But I eventually called her. I called my boss first to tell him I got caught and that he mustn't let the other drug mule [mentions name] to go to South Africa with the drugs. I tried talking to him two times but before I could tell him more information, the police officials took the phone from me. He got the lawyers for*



*me in court, but we don't keep in contact anymore because I'm in here."*

*"They scanned my bag in customs when they were looking at our passports and they found the drugs. Then they said to me they found some things in my bag and said I must go with them. I couldn't speak good English, but I told the truth about the drugs. They used Google (Google translate) to talk to me. And that's when I knew I was going to jail. The translator was there to tell me everything. But I only saw my lawyer three times" (Participant 15).*

*"I was transiting from Brazil to South Africa then to Mozambique and then when I was getting off the plane in South Africa, three men came to me and said my name and I said yes. I think they had a picture of me because they came straight to me. They took my passport and we went to check in. Then I went to the office and they brought my bags in and they asked me if I had any illegal things on me and I said no. They searched my bags then they found the drugs. It's like, they were happy that they were right, and they kept on saying 'jail, jail'" (Participant 17).*

*"So, the lady in Brazil said to me that she got me a ticket to go home but I'm going to take a transit flight because the direct plane was full. When I was in transit, they checked everyone's passport. They checked mine and asked me if I am [mentions name] and I said yes. The police took my bags and asked me to go with them. They asked me questions about where I come from and where I work. I told them, I told them the truth about me. Then they asked me if I have any drugs and I was very shocked, I said no. They searched my bag and took out the clothes in the bags and the drugs were in the bag wrapped like big bricks. I was very shocked, and I asked them how did they get there and they said the drugs were mine. I tried to convince them, but they didn't believe me. I was crying and I didn't believe what was going on because they said I'm going to jail in South Africa. I asked to call my husband, but I ended up calling the lady from Brazil first to help me explain to them, but nobody was answering their phones" (Participant 18).*

*"I get to O.R. Tambo and I get off the plane because it's transit but now, when I get off, there are police waiting for us (passengers) but I didn't understand because the guy in Brazil said to me only one police man will know me because he sent him my picture and the details of my plane. So, when I saw a lot of police*

*there, I got a bit worried now because I'm confused. But I keep calm and I walk in the line because they will want to see our tickets and passports. But then, when I get there, they ask me my name and I told them then they said I must step to the side while they wait. Then they put aside another man and woman and I just got very confused because I was just standing there saying nothing. Then they said we must go with the police to the police station. I try to talk to the other lady, but she doesn't understand me, so we are all confused. Then I find out that they are other smugglers. The girl was from South Africa and the guy was Nigerian. Then I keep on asking the police at the station in my language, what do they want from me because my plane will leave me, but no one understands me. Then, later on, they bring in a translator and he asks me if I'm carrying any illegal substances on me and I must not lie. Then I knew that I had to tell the truth because they will see them anyway. I told the guy I have them and that's when they said I am going to jail. Then they asked me who is my boss and if I knew the Nigerian guy and South African lady and I said no. At the end, they gave me a phone to call. At first, I called my sister and I told her what happened, and she didn't believe me. And then she said she will call the guy. He answered his phone and acted so shocked and like he didn't understand. He said he will help me to get out, but I haven't heard from him since and my sister doesn't know where he is"* (Participant 19).

*"I went to go get my bag because I had to take an Uber to a hotel in Kempton Park. So, when I was waiting, they asked for my passport and said I must go with the customs office. They scanned it again and told me that they see something they are not sure about in my bag when they were scanning it. They asked me to open my bags and there were only my clothes. I'm not sure if it was the security or the police started cutting my bag open and they found the drugs in the lining of the bag. I didn't cry or anything because I was scared. I knew that I was going to get arrested and nothing I can say will help me, so I kept quiet"* (Participant 20).

As seen in the above verbatim responses, 11 participants reported that customs and/or the police already had pre-informed information about their arrival, including their picture and flight information. That was the point when all of the drug mules in this study realised that they were going to be caught for smuggling drugs. Some participants reported that their recruiters were unavailable and did not answer their phones when they tried calling them after they were caught by police officials. As

confirmed by Hübschle (2010: 28–29) who states that female drug mules are in the lowest level of the drug trade and are replaced by other individuals who are also vulnerable because to their social and economic conditions. This means that drug dealers and recruiters do not want to be traced so they dissociate themselves from the mule as soon as she is arrested.

The interrogation process was emotionally difficult for some participants because they could not explain their side of the story and could not speak English. Participants also reported that sniffer dogs, scanners and x-rays were used to detect drugs. Some took laxatives and milk to extract the drugs they swallowed once they were caught (Hübschle 2014: 40). Even though scanners are used to detect drugs in luggage, they are not always efficient. The luggage of Participant 03 went through scanners several times but no drugs were detected. Translators were available for some and others had to wait for hours to receive any assistance. The participants also explained that the trial took as long as a year and a half before they were sentenced.

The typology of a drug mule, as discussed in sub-section 2.4.1, is a representation of mainly two identifiable types of drug mules: the self-employed drug mule or “petty smuggler” and the professional drug mule. During the interview process with the respondents, the researcher was able to establish the type of drug mule each participant was, based on the following factors: a) if the drug mule was aware that she was smuggling drugs; b) if the drug mule was paid by her recruiter; and c) whether the drug mule had any input or made suggestions in the events leading to the smuggling of drugs. With reference to the three abovementioned factors and the literature in this study by Van de Bunt et al (2003: 1), Van Heerden (2014: 71), UNODC (2018: 71) and Carey (2014: 56), none of the participants in this study were regarded as petty smugglers. A petty smuggler is self-employed, uses unconventional ways, such smuggling drugs in a bag, and smuggles drugs as a form of self-enrichment. Even though the female drug mules in this study were motivated by their own personal reasons, as discussed under section 4.3, they were recruited and not self-employed, which excludes them from the petty smuggler type of drug mule. The second type of a drug mule can be separated into two types: a professional drug mule and a decoy mule. These types of mules are specifically

recruited by drug syndicates and are paid a wage or salary to transport drugs. A professional drug mule is more likely to be trusted by the recruiter, is well travelled and more experienced. According to Van Heerden (2014: 71), professional drug mules smuggle drugs that are of high quality and rarely get caught. Only two participants (Participants 09 and 13) were classified as professional drug mules in this study. Participants 09 and 13 were trusted by their recruiters and had smuggled drugs more than once prior to the arrests. Participants 09 and 13 were paid immediately after they completed their jobs successfully and had a good relationship with their recruiters. Participant 13 smuggled drugs for her boyfriend in exchange for money and free travelling experiences. A professional drug mule also may have input or suggestions in the events leading to the smuggling of drugs. Even though Participants 09 and 13 did not decide on the amount of drugs they carried or how they will smuggle them, they could choose not to do a certain job, as seen in Participant 13's verbatim response: *"I had to go to Thailand to go do the job of that girl that got arrested for putting drugs in her hair ... but I declined it. I didn't feel like going at that time."* Participant 09, on the other hand, never declined a job. She knew the risks of getting caught and felt that every opportunity presented to her was a way to make money as she knew that money ran out quickly.

Even though a female drug mule may be a first-time smuggler, she can become a professional drug mule after successful drug smuggling trips. But a professional drug mule is still at risk of getting caught even with all necessary security precautions put in place by her recruiters. Such as the case of Participants 03 and 19. Participant 03 was a first-time smuggler who volunteered to smuggle drugs for her friends. Participant 03's case is different from the other two professional drug mules (Participants 09 and 013) in this study. Even though she did not get paid for smuggling drugs, she constantly maintained that she was not supposed to get caught on the day of her arrest. She reported having good connections with her recruiters in South Africa and the drug suppliers in Brazil. She toured the cocaine plant field during her stay as she explained in her verbatim response:

*"One day, they took me to a place like a farm. I didn't mind because I was touring the place while I wait to go back home and so that's when they showed me the plant where cocaine comes from and I asked questions like how they make it to*

*be powder and they told me.”*

Participant 03 smuggled a large amount of drugs and was well informed of the processes of her trip. Although she is incarcerated, she fully believes that she was not blindsided and understands that her friends (recruiters) did not try to assist her because they did not want to be implicated in her case. Participant 19 was acquainted with a drug dealer. She became a recruiter when her acquaintance asked her to recruit women to smuggle drugs to South Africa and Mozambique. After she realised how much money they were making, she also became a drug mule. Even though police officials were waiting for her at ORTIA, Participant 19 believes that she was not set up as she explained:

*“Something went wrong with the guy [her recruiter] and the police. I don’t know who told them because it was arranged that I was going to deliver and get my money. I think something went wrong because I used to send girls to him (to smuggle drugs), and no one was arrested, you know.”*

According to the participants, their recruiters made sure that the drugs were properly concealed and, even though they were caught, corrupt police officials were informed so they would not get caught. Perhaps the intended precautions were because they assisted voluntarily or because Participant 19 was already involved in the process as a recruiter at her salon.

According to Van Heerden (2014: 71), a decoy mule does not complete successful drug transactions. Eleven interviewees (participant 01, 04, 05, 06, 07, 08, 10, 11, 12, 14 and 18) in this study were decoy mules. Seven participants were promised employment and four participants were told they were travelling for business purposes. The eleven participants had three factors in common: (1) they did not know that they were smuggling drugs; (2) police officials knew about their arrival or the drugs they were carrying; and (3) they were not paid the money they were promised. The female drug mules in this category type did not have an opportunity to opt out of smuggling drugs once they knew what they were doing and some only found out that they had drugs in their possession once they arrived at their destination. Other drug mules reported that their pictures were taken and they were told that the pictures would be used as identification for the individuals who will

receive the drugs from them or will fetch them from the airport. Only one decoy mule (Participant 10) travelled alongside a professional drug mule (they both were arrested) and had to follow the professional mule's instructions. Literature by Meehan et al (2015: 3) as discussed under section 2.4.2.2 states that drug mules may also work in teams which display group behavioural characteristics. The drug mules may not necessarily sit together on the plane, walk with one another, or even speak to one another. Participant 10 reported that her role was to remain quiet and keep a distance away from the professional drug mule that she was travelling with to avoid any suspicions. She explained that, once they landed in South Africa, the professional drug mule began to ignore her and started to act "funny". She assumed that, when drug mules are doing the same job together (on the same day and destination), there should be very minimal or no communication especially in front of officials, closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras or in the queue that may reveal any familiarity between the drug mules. Perhaps that is why the professional drug mule did not respond to any of Participant 10's communication gestures. This verifies literature by Meehan et al (2015: 3) that couriers traveling together may quickly glance at their partners to ensure that they are there or they may follow their partners at a distance which allows them to communicate covertly and evade detection.

Participant 19 was also on the same plane as two other drug mules (male and female) that she was not aware of. This proves that, in some instances, drug mules are not always aware that they are not the only drug mule on a plane.

With regards to the types and terms of drug mules, Participants 07 and 09 informed the researcher about the terms used in the drug trafficking network. Drug mules are referred to as "drug traffickers" and recruiters or "bosses" are referred to as "drug dealers" or "drug leaders". This distinction was made when the researcher asked the participants what type of drug mule they considered themselves to be.

#### **4.6 THE EFFECTS OF DRUG SMUGGLING ON THE OFFENDER AND HER FAMILY**

According to various studies on the rehabilitation of offenders in correctional centres by Murhula and Singh (2019: 27), Khwela (2015: 409) and Lekalakala (2016: 31), the

support structure from family, the community and correctional centres is important in building positive characters for offenders once they are back into their communities. The researcher was very mindful of how sensitive this study may be for some of the participants. However, it was important for the researcher to ask the participants how they were adjusting to the correctional centre environment, especially for the foreign participants. This section briefly highlight the effects the drug mules' actions have on themselves and their families, and their adaption at the correctional centre.

#### **4.6.1 Psychological and emotional effects as a result of incarceration**

Participants indicated that it took time for them to come to terms with the impact their decisions made in their lives. As a result, a few respondents reported having suffered from anxiety and depression as a result of being away from their families for the period of time they are incarcerated. According to Chen, Lai and Lin (2013: 7-10), imprisonment can contribute to depression, frustration, anxiety, loneliness, panic, self-harm and attempted suicide. Isolation from loved ones and comfort zones (within a social sense in terms of family, friends and freedom), and difficulties with adaptation can lead to mental health issues that were originally generated by childhood and adulthood abuse and trauma. The participants from South Africa indicated that visits from family members assisted them in coping with their current circumstances and brought them toiletries and money to buy from the store inside the correctional centre. All of the women in this study admitted regretting their decision to smuggle drugs, stating that in their desperation to help their families, they did not consider the consequences of their actions. They did not realise that they would serve such lengthy sentences and felt that the money was not worth it. They felt that they had let their families down, both by committing the crime, and by being separated from them. Participant 03 stated:

*"My brothers were so disappointed in me. They didn't understand for a long time. But they were there for me so I could keep my spirits high in prison. I ended up asking for a transfer from Sun City to here so I can be closer to my brothers in Mamelodi. But I learned that nothing is worth being here. If I knew this could be me, I would rather be broke in Qwa Qwa."*

According to the Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research (SCCJR, 2015: 3),

the impact of female incarceration causes emotional distress for family members because the notion of temporarily losing a mother, sister or daughter from the family means the incarcerated family member will miss out on sharing important family events, such as birthdays, weddings or their children's first day of school (SCCJR, 2015: 3). In addition, the family of the incarcerated may also be stigmatised for the crime committed by the family member who is sentenced. Subsequently, even though families are legally innocent and usually had no participation in the offence, family relatives are often considered as responsible or guilty by association. This makes incarceration more challenging for family members. The SCCJR (2015: 3) also emphasises that incarceration can cause financial pressure on the relatives of the incarcerated family member by reducing the family income and by increasing family expenses, due to expensive trips and visits, telephone calls, and giving money to their loved ones in a correctional centre.

The foreign national offenders who participated in this study mentioned that they asked for the possibility of serving their sentences in their home countries. However, South Africa does not have a correctional transfer treaty. Participant 10 added,

*"I know we are all away from our families but it's more difficult when you can't see them or touch your children, you know. Now I know that. It's sad but I have to be strong 'til I go home."*

Amongst other factors that drug trafficking syndicates keep in mind when recruiting drug mules is whether or not a country has extradition treaties (see section 2.2). According to the DoJ and CD (2019), South Africa currently has extradition agreements with only 13 countries. As seen in this chapter, foreign drug mules interviewed in the study are not eligible to serve their sentences in their home countries. This may be beneficial to foreign drug mule recruiters because the chances of the recruiter being arrested may be very slim.

#### **4.6.2 Adaption to the correctional environment**

The purpose of this section was not to ask the participants about the conditions of the correctional centre but to find out about their adaptation process in the correctional centres especially as first time offenders. The participants in this study



discussed their challenges with adapting when they first arrived at Kgoši Mampuru II and Johannesburg Female Correctional Centre. Participant 05 indicated that, in the beginning, her inability to speak English was her toughest challenge as she had to rely on other offenders to translate until she was able to speak adequate English. Nonetheless, as time went by, the participant became accustomed to life in a correctional centre and she now understands South African languages when correctional officials talk to her.

Offenders also acquire jobs in the correctional centres, such as Participant 19:

*"I work here in the prison like the secretary. I help with books and I make tea and coffee. I also own salons so I make wigs and I do the ladies' hair here. I prefer that because it keeps me busy. I don't want to sit and think about how my life could be different."*

The participants did not touch on the negative aspects of a correctional centre, instead they focused on aspects that help them while they are incarcerated. They felt that the correctional system offered them an opportunity to study, learn a new language and to practise their religion. Some women also built friendships with other offenders and have come to terms with their crimes. The findings from this section contradicted the researcher's preconceived ideas about incarceration and the experience of the correctional environment.

## **4.7 SUMMARY**

This study has demonstrated that a heterogeneous group of women from different nationalities, ethnics, social backgrounds, ages and experiences can become involved in drug trafficking as drug mules. This chapter outlined the in-depth interviews of female drug mules incarcerated at two correctional centres in the Gauteng Province of South Africa (i.e., Kgoši Mampuru II and Johannesburg Correctional Centres). The demographical information of the female drug mules was a representation of women aged between 26 and 53 years, from South Africa, Brazil, Thailand, Cabo Verde, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Mozambique, Malawi, Paraguay, Angola and Congo. The interviewees were also racially diverse which includes female drug mules who are Asian, Creole, Caucasian and African. The findings of the study

revealed that the female drug mules smuggled between 10g and 10kg of cocaine and heroin and used swallowing, body concealment and concealing in luggage or packages as methods to smuggle the drugs. The researcher also identified the causes, contributory factors and motives related to the participants' offending behaviour. What is common amongst most of the women is the involvement of a trusted individual who promised the drug mule a good financial opportunity. As a result, the impact of the offence and sentence on the women was significant, with many reporting disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, poverty and employment problems. In the next chapter, the summary of findings, based on the objectives of this study, and recommendations are discussed.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the findings of the study and make recommendations based on the research findings. The purpose of the study was to gain an in-depth understanding on the phenomenon of female drug mules and to explain the reasons why female drug mules are involved in drug smuggling. It is widely believed and also shown in this study, that a woman's involvement in drug smuggling can also be related to vulnerability and injustice, as they are compelled to act out of fear. In addition, women may accept lower wages than men. Women may be required to accept lower payment rates than men for drug trafficking, so some drug trafficking syndicates may be more likely to use women as drug mules (UNODC, 2018: 7). All the twenty participants for this study are female. The findings were drawn by the objectives of this study, as discussed in sub-section 1.3.2. This study contributes towards the study of drug trafficking through the use of drug mules. Lastly, based on the need to provide awareness on the phenomenon of female drug mules, recommendations aimed at bringing awareness to women on the risk factors of being recruited as a drug mule and the motivating factors that lead women to become drug mules are provided.

#### **5.2 RESEARCH OVERVIEW**

Qualitative research is important in the field of criminology and criminal justice (Dantzker et al, 2018: 61). The qualitative approach implemented in this study enabled an in-depth understanding of the experiences of female drug mules. This study utilised face-to-face, semi-structured interviews to collect data. The research questions and objectives of this study were answered and met as a result of the comprehensive data provided by the female drug mules interviewed, which allowed the empirical study to explore and explain the various motivations each female participant had in their own verbatim responses.

The thorough literature review built a foundation of knowledge in order to understand the phenomenon of female drug mules. Various criminological theories were

implemented to explain and assist in distinguishing the causes, contributory factors and motives of criminal behaviour of the female offenders who took part in this study. The qualitative data that were obtained allowed for a successful portrayal of the various causes, motives and contributing factors of the participants' involvement in drug smuggling. The acquired data were analysed through a process of thematic analysis where information obtained from each female offender was coded and sorted according to specific themes.

### **5.2.1 Overview of chapters**

**Chapter One** provided an orientation of the phenomenon under study and provided a brief overview of female drug mules. The value and importance of the study was highlighted, and the key concepts used in this study were defined and unpacked. The aims, purpose and objectives and research questions of the study were also explained.

In **Chapter Two**, a national and international review of literature relating to the phenomenon of female drug mules was provided. Chapter Two further comprised a discussion on transnational organised crime with specific reference to drug trafficking; motivations of female drug mules; profile of the offender; the recruitment process as well the preventative measures against drug smuggling. Criminological theories, specifically feminist theories, were also used to explain the motivations of female drug mules.

**Chapter Three** provided an overview of the methodological structure of this study. A qualitative approach was undertaken with an explorative goal. All the ethical considerations that were implemented during the fieldwork were also discussed in this chapter.

Qualitative data collection methods were utilised in **Chapter Four**, where thematic analysis was used to analyse and interpret the data from the empirical research. The analysed data provided the researcher with detailed accounts of the demographical information, experiences, recruitment process and motives of the participants who took part in this study in order to explain, without making generalisations, the criminal decisions and motives of a female drug mule.

**Chapter Five** outlines the research findings that were identified in this empirical study that stemmed from the research objectives and research questions. Recommendations for this study and for future research are also discussed.

### **5.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The following research questions were answered and were used a guide for the researcher in order to achieve the objectives of this study as well as provide in-depth information on female drug mules incarcerated in the two South African female correctional centres.

- What is the profile of a female drug mule incarcerated at the Kgoši Mampuru and Johannesburg female correctional centres?
- What are the risk factors contributing to females being targeted or recruited as drug mules?
- What motivates females to become or continue being drug mules?
- What is the physical and emotional impact of smuggling drugs on the mules and/or their families?
- What are the methods used by mules to smuggle the drugs?

### **5.4 FINDINGS RELATING TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES**

The following is a summary of the main research findings of this study based on the research questions and objectives.

#### **5.4.1 Objective 1: To develop a profile for female drug mules incarcerated in South African correctional centres, specifically Kgoši Mampuru II and Johannesburg Correction Centres**

An objective of this study was to develop a profile of a female drug mule, with specific reference to offenders incarcerated at the Kgoši Mampuru II and Johannesburg Correctional Centres. According to Labuschagne (2003: 67), profiling is a deliberate practice conducted in order to assist an investigator in determining the most likely type of person to have committed a particular crime. The profile is designed to be used as a method of identification for suspects in an investigation (Labuschagne, 2003: 67).

During the data analysis process, the researcher was able to obtain details about the life events that contributed to the offenders' participation in crime. This section presents a profile of the 20 female offenders who smuggled drugs across the South African border. This profile of female drug mules may be used as a guideline for other research on profiling. The general profile of a female drug mule in this study was developed through the incorporation of the drug mule's biographical information, socio-economic background, educational background, employment history and the female drug mule's criminal history.

A female drug mule, who took part in this study, is an African or a Spanish woman who was born in South Africa or South America. She was raised by a single mother with between one and eight siblings. She is the first born of her siblings and has secondary education but no tertiary education as a result of a lack of finances. She is a mother with one to four children, is single and is the breadwinner of her family. She is open to methods that can produce various streams of income to support her children and family. She began smuggling drugs between the years 2012 and 2018 and is between 30 and 40 years old. She also further depicts the following behavioural characteristics:

- She travels alone and does not book or pay for her own flight.
- She travels light (very few bags) and her luggage can be smell of chemical or fragrant odours that mask the smell of the drugs hidden away.
- She does not eat any food during the flight
- Her main aim is to look "normal" and blend into the environment and avoid social contact as much as possible (at the airport or during the flight). However, she may also reveal signs of anxiety, nerves and stress.
- Dealing in drugs was her first criminal offence and she is a decoy mule (see 2.4.1 for typology of a female drug mule).

#### **5.4.2 Objective 2: To establish criminogenic risk factors for being recruited and used as drug mules**

The criminogenic risk factors of being recruited as a drug mule are discussed in Chapter Two and the analysis in Chapter Four. Found in this study is that a plethora of risk factors puts one at risk of being recruited as a female drug mule and that no one

factor can be attributed as the principal reason why women are being targeted by drug trafficking syndicates. Nonetheless, this study revealed that women are recruited as drug mules because of their vulnerability. Most women are primary caregivers of their children and they worry about putting food on the table, providing shelter and paying for their children's education. The 20 women who took part in this study said they were at risk of being recruited as drug mules because they were:

- financially unstable or in a vulnerable state;
- unemployed or open to new means of making more money;
- interested in travelling for life experiences, however, could not afford to pay for the trip themselves;
- easily trusting and emotionally vulnerable; and
- not paying attention to detail and are easily manipulated.

Important to note is that the abovementioned profile is not representative of all female drug mules.

#### **5.4.3 Objective 3: To explain the mule's motivation(s) for being involved in drug smuggling**

Eighteen of the 20 participants acknowledged that the most important factor which caused them to smuggle drugs was the need for money to support their families or their lifestyles, or to travel (as reported by Participants 13 and 17). The other reasons that were given by the respondents for smuggling drugs were based on their socio-economic backgrounds, poverty, unemployment and involvement by deception, which are all linked to the main motivating factor, money. Eight research participants grew up in difficult socio-economic backgrounds. The unavailability of employment opportunities and the lack of formal education and financial opportunities for tertiary education also prevented them from living a better life.

It can, however, be safely concluded that like the criminogenic factors, discussed in the previous section, motivation cannot be reduced to a single factor because this study revealed that there are multiple reasons that influence females to become drug mules. Equally important, this research highlighted that women commit crime for several reasons other than being driven by poverty or a financial need.

#### **5.4.4 Objective 4: To determine the physical and emotional impact drug smuggling has on the drug mule**

The crime committed by the participants in this study affected them more emotionally than physically, as reported by both foreign nationals and South Africans, especially having to cope with being away from their families and children. Research participants reported being emotionally traumatised, afraid, stressed, anxious and depressed. Some participants reported that they had a lack of trust and constantly questioned the intentions of other people, had constant feelings of anger and self-blame, and had difficulties coming to terms with their current circumstances.

#### **5.4.5 Objective 5: To determine the methods used by drug mules to smuggle drugs**

The most common method used to smuggle drugs in this study was through luggage concealment. The drugs were concealed inside the luggage, either in a double-lining or in a false-bottom, before the respondents received the luggage. Other methods used by the research respondents were swallowing capsules or “bullets”, body concealment, hiding in clothing or packages.

All 20 female drug mules who took part in this research stated that they were given instructions by their recruiters to look “normal” and not suspicious, even though the intention was for the mule to be caught and arrested (refer to sections 2.4.1 and 4.5.3 on decoy mules). Seventeen participants reported smuggling cocaine, which is the most common drug to smuggle because it can also be used to make other drugs such as *nyaope*, a popular drug amongst the South African youth. According to the participants, one kilogram of cocaine has a street value of at least R290 000, and 10 kilograms has a street value of R2,5 million. The most common destinations to smuggle drugs – from the supplier to the buyer – is from Brazil to South Africa. The respondents in this study reported being flown from their home countries to Brazil to first receive the drugs and to make the delivery in South Africa and were promised at least R40 000 for a successful delivery.



## **5.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

- **Lack of previous research in South Africa**

In spite of all the limitations of this study, recommendations for further studies on this subject, particularly in South Africa, are necessary. There is a lack of research on the phenomenon of drug mules in South Africa, especially considering that there is a significant number of South African women and men incarcerated in correctional centres in other countries for drug trafficking. This study has only included 20 female offenders incarcerated at the Kgoši Mampuru II and Johannesburg Correctional Centres. As a result, generalisations cannot be made due to sample size limitations and thus a national study, including all female correctional centres, with a bigger sample size, is recommended. It would have been interesting to see when the participants in the study started smuggling versus when they got arrested and some analysis on the gap between onset and arrest. This research will assist security stakeholders to profile drug traffickers.

- **Access to interview SAPS officials based at O.R. Tambo International Airport**

A limitation in this study was gaining access to the SAPS to interview officials based at O.R. Tambo International Airport. The aim was to use the data collected from the SAPS officials to evaluate the current measures used at ports of entry (specifically at ORTIA) to deter and combat smuggling of drugs into and out of South Africa which could lead to further research that focuses on preventative measures of drug smuggling.

- **Study limitations experienced while conducting interviews at DCS female centres**

The researcher experienced a lack of participation by some of the offenders before she explained the purpose of the research and the interviews. This limitation was a result of the prospective participants' decisions and right not to participate in the study. A helpful resort would be for DCS to sensitise offenders more (without intimidating or forcing them) about the important role they are fulfilling in research, and the outcomes thereof. In that way, offenders are not overwhelmed by the presence and questions asked by

the researcher.

The language barrier between the researcher and the research participants was a challenge. The researcher did not have a professional translator but received assistance from other offenders who are fluent in English, Portuguese and Spanish. However, the availability of a professional translator would have contributed to a smoother interview process. A number of participants reported that, even though they may be able to speak English (which is a common language at the correctional centres), it would have been of assistance if some correctional officials were able to speak other languages in addition to the official South African languages to assist with the communication barrier where foreign offenders are concerned.

## **5.6 RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is evident from the data analysis conducted in this study, as well as media reports, that the trafficking of drugs by female drug mules is still operative in drug trafficking syndicates. In this section, the researcher provides recommendations from the study.

### **5.6.1 Further research on drug mules and drug trafficking syndicates**

It is also recommended that a study on drug trafficking recruiters should also be conducted, mainly because drug mules are not aware of the procedures and details of smuggling drugs as they are merely given instructions. Another recommendation is to conduct research on the female drug mule's life after incarceration, with regards to the effectiveness of rehabilitation, reintegration and adaptation to the society and their safety from their previous recruiters. Furthermore, an important theme emerged from the results of this study where four of the participants reported having taken part in drug smuggling through their own free will (refer to section 4.4). As explained before, most research on the topic (including this study) portray women who commit crime as victims instead of willing participants who have agency. It is thus recommended that future research be conducted on the latter.

### **5.6.2 The importance of gender equality and women empowerment**

Gender inequality is evident in South Africa and the countries from which other

offenders in this study are from (see Chapter Four). Substantive inequality is expressed at both a broad, systemic societal level, and in cases of direct discrimination. Systemic disparities related to the sexual division of labour, and the lack of access to finances, resources, land and social resources, such as education, tend to disadvantage women and gender minorities. The sample of this study was very diverse, however, all the women reported similar challenges they faced on a daily basis before incarceration. This revealed that the challenges of inequality and the negative aspects that come with inequality affect all kinds of women especially those who come from neglected and poor communities (see section 2.7). A holistic approach is required to combat gender inequalities in all sectors of society and the economy. Government must take concrete steps to address gender inequality and take action to empower women (as discussed in sub-section 5.6.3) to realise their capabilities, especially women who are socially disadvantaged. As found in this study and also evident in the literature chapter, drug mules are often from vulnerable, desperate and poor backgrounds, that is why drug trafficking syndicates target them. As such, to prevent girls and women from being recruited as drug mules, gaps with regards to their well-being need to be closed. It is also important to monitor progress in gender equity and women's empowerment in order to see whether initiatives put in place, by various employment industries and government, to ensure gender equity are effective. According to the World Bank (2007: 106), gender inequality in rights, resources, and voice can surface in three domains: in the household, in the economy and markets, and in society. These factors were evident in the findings of this study as discussed in Chapter Four. Gender inequality on the market is represented in unequal access to employment markets, credit, unequal access to new production technologies and land. In society, gender inequality is reflected as limitations to women's participation in political and civic life. Working women contribute to household income whereas in poor households, such contributions are often not feasible which perpetuates financial deprivation and in turn lead to decreased access to education and employment. These afore-mentioned consequences of inequality were all highlighted in Chapter Two and Chapter Four as reasons why females engage in drug smuggling. Therefore, gender equality and empowerment of women in general may be one of the strategies used to prevent the use of women as drug mules.

### **5.6.3 The importance of a family structure**

The lack of family structure has resulted to female drug mules being raised in a single parent family or by extended family members. Günindi and Demircioğlu (2012: 550) define a family as a unit comprising of members who are bound with kinship and social bonds, who live in the same place with different roles, and influence one another to meet each other's psychological, social, cultural and economic needs. The importance of a family structure, with a good support system enables an individual to socialise, learn and find their identity in a positive environment. Specifically, the presence of a father (or a father figure) (which lacked in the family dynamics of the participants in this study) in an individual's life can have a positive impact in the early development years. The latter, is not to perceive the idea that a home with no father present may result to disruptive children and adults. Criminological theories emphasise that family provides foundation for how a person can be a part of the society and life. It is primarily the family who ensure that the individual is content with life, fulfils his/her duties and obeys the norms of society as well as the law of the State. The positive experiences that a family set for the individual add to the importance of developing positive social behaviours and values. From a criminological point of view, a dysfunctional family (i.e. unemployment, single parenthood, parent-child conflict, domestic violence) is often a risk for future delinquency or crime, and individuals that come from such homes are said to be at greater risk or are more likely to commit offences, as was the case with some of the drug mules who participated in this study, than individuals who were not. According to Wong (2017: 2), family instability creates a variety of issues and has adverse effects on the formal and informal control systems, social networks and collective efficacy of the society, which, in turn, contribute to increased crime and delinquency.

### **5.6.4 Recommendations for Airport Company South Africa (ACSA) and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), SAPS, and DCS**

The most important aspect that may reduce the number of women recruited into drug smuggling is awareness that should be raised in workshops, community engagement initiatives and in community meetings that will assist women (and men) to be more knowledgeable about the recruitment of drug mules.

Awareness initiatives will not only address risk factors of being recruited as a mule but will also inform people who are not aware of this crime and its consequences. The SAPS, other relevant government organisations, such as the Department of Home Affairs (DoHA), ACSA and NGOs, are encouraged to develop awareness programmes that will reach vulnerable members of the society who may be recruited as drug mules. These can include campaigns through the radio, television, social media and pamphlets.

The SAPS and ACSA host conferences in the security sector on drug trafficking with the aim to improve prevention measures but neglect educating individuals and communities about the risk factors and consequences of drug smuggling.

With regards to foreign drug mules incarnated in South African female correctional centres, the DCS should look at advancing the process of approving offenders' transfer agreements. This would not only benefit South Africans incarcerated at correctional centres in other countries but would also contribute to humanness and support to offenders as well as the need to reintegrate the offenders back into society. Not only will this agreement provide foreign nationals an opportunity to complete the remainder of their sentences in their home countries once eligible for parole, but it will also ensure that the foreign offenders follow the terms and conditions of their parole, as they will complete the remaining sentences in their home country.

#### **5.6.5 Quality policing in South Africa**

According to Pauw, Woods, Van der Linde, Fourie and Visser (2009: 344), corruption can be referred to as the misuse of a position for the benefit of a person or group to whom one owes allegiance or for an individual's personal gain. These authors see corruption as a two-way process involving representatives of both the public and private sectors, engaging in illegal and illegal actions that weaken the economic prospects of the country and weaken social and political institutions. Manyaka and Nkuna (2014: 1574) add that government officials often collect bribes for providing permits and licences and for giving passage to drug mules through customs. However, both minor and significant forms of corruption harm public confidence and transparency, and distort public resource distribution, thus decreasing economic

development and increasing poverty.

According to Yesufu (2014: 5), the issue of corrupt police officials is not a new phenomenon. Police officers deal with criminals on a daily basis and may become susceptible to corruption. The respondents in this study reported that custom officials are paid to either help a drug mule pass undetected or to sell any confiscated illicit drugs back to the drug dealers (see sub-section 4.5.2.4). As a result, police officials also act as if they are unaccountable and therefore untouchable (Manyaka & Nkuna 2014:1576). It is thus important to emphasise to SAPS officials that respect for the rule of law applies equally to both law enforcement officers as well as ordinary citizens.

According to Manyaka and Nkuna (2014: 1576), police officers may resort to corrupt practices to supplement inadequate public sector wages. Manyaka and Nkuna (2014: 1576) elaborate that the reason why police officers accept bribes is because

“... taking bribery is seen as an add-on to their salaries. The reality is, while low wages may be partly responsible for this behaviour, the primary reason why bribery is common is because it is difficult to identify and monitor on the side of the bribe receiver and on the side of the individual that is handing out the bribe, the incentive is to get away with an offence which will cost much less than a cheap bribe is too strong”

The above quote matches the findings of this study since it was revealed that syndicates are willing to pay police officials to overlook these crimes.

Yesufu (2014: 7) states that societal strain causes corruption. People who do not have financial power in their communities are often pressured to do everything they can to be respected and accepted as successful community members. Due to societal pressure, some people can resort to unlawful actions to succeed.

Ethical standards are also lacking in the police services. Yesufu (2014: 9) emphasises that the guidelines stipulated by organisations to assure that members uphold their constitutional obligation to serve and protect and therefore, ethical principles do not tolerate misconduct and bribery. Lastly, corrupt police officers receive bribes because of greed. It may be possible that the feeling of receiving more money and not being held liable for breaking the law provides the officer with more will to continue.

Manyaka and Nkuna (2014: 1577) argue that the approach to combat corruption in the South African public sector should be led by a solid understanding of what causes corruption to increase and equally on the best practices both locally and globally. Corrupt officials should be held accountable for their actions through anti-corruption strategies. Moreover, corruption free prevention strategies need to be increased. As previously mentioned, if there is a lack of action the culprits are likely to continue engaging in the unlawful behaviour because there are no effective and speedy consequences. However, if the system is strong people are less likely to engage in corruption because chances of being caught and punished are high.

## **5.7 CONCLUSION**

This study explored the motivating factors of female drug mules incarcerated at the Kgoši Mampuru II and Johannesburg correctional centres. The 20 research participants in the study were representative of different ages, backgrounds, different ethnicities and racial groups which allowed for diversity. Through data analysis, it was found that offenders in this study did not have tertiary education, are single mothers and came from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. As a result of their financial and social circumstances, they were driven to smuggle drugs. Findings from this study relating to the reasons why females become drug mules are similar to those of other local and international research projects.

Drug trafficking, through the use of female drug mules, is a phenomenon which is overlooked when compared to other crimes in South Africa. Drug trafficking has dangerous and harmful consequence for the drug mule and the society at large. Awareness and educational campaigns with the aim of informing the society on the risks of being recruited as drug mules can assist vulnerable communities. It is the researcher's desire that this study stimulates further conversations on female drug mules in mainstream media and in communities in order to ultimately the problem.

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## **ANNEXURE A: INFORMED CONSENT LETTER**

***The University of South Africa***

***College of Law***

***Department of Criminology and Security Sciences***

**Researcher:** Nokonwaba Mnguni

**Title of Study:** A criminological exploration of South African female drug mules incarcerated in Kgoši Mampuru II and Johannesburg correctional centres.

Dear Prospective Participant

My name is Nokonwaba Mnguni and I am doing research in the Department of Criminology and Security Science towards a Master of Arts Degree in Criminal Justice, at the University of South Africa. You are invited to participate in a study entitled: A criminological exploration of South African female drug mules.

### **a) What is the purpose of this study?**

I am conducting this research to understand the nature and extent of South African female drug mules as a social phenomenon. This study aims to fill the gap in addressing the phenomenon of female drug mules and seeks to conceptualise and understand the problem. The objectives of this study are as follows:

- To develop a profile for female drug mules incarcerated in South African correctional centers
- To establish risk factors for being recruited and used as drug mules
- To explain the mule's motivation(s) for being involved in drug smuggling and
- To determine the physical and emotional impact drug smuggling has on the drug mule.

**b) Why am I being invited to participate?**

You are an individual who has knowledge or experience about drug trafficking/organised crime, particularly the use of female drug mules in drug smuggling. The method that was used to obtain your information stemmed from and was guided by the purposive sampling where research participants are purposively chosen to participate in the study because of their knowledge in a particular phenomenon. However, this study also makes use of snowballing where participants are asked to suggest other people who are knowledgeable on the topic.

**c) What is the nature of my participation in this study?**

You will be required to participate in a direct (face to face) interview that will be recorded with your permission. The interview will be conducted using a semi-structured interview schedule, creating informal, flexible atmosphere to do an in- depth exploration of the research themes and other information relating to the research topic. The interview will focus on your knowledge and experiences about female drug mules. The expected duration of the interview should not exceed two hours. The guidelines for the interview can be made available to you upon your request.

**d) Can I withdraw from this study even after having agreed to participate?**

Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time. In the event that you wish to withdraw participation, the data from your interview will be destroyed. The researcher will be the only individual who has access to the raw data from the interviews, thereby ensuring that the data will be treated as confidential and your anonymity will be ensured.

**e) What are the potential benefits of taking part in this study?**

Your participation in this study will contribute to the conclusion of this study with the hope of adding valuable contribution to the scientific research community and for the formal law enforcement to have an in-depth understanding of the contributing reasons of the phenomena and how it can be prevented. I additionally hope that findings from the study will also serve as a document of knowledge to individuals who are not as knowledgeable about female drug mules.

**f) Will the information that I convey to the researcher and my identity be kept confidential?**

You have the right to anonymity and confidentiality if you participate in this study, unless you wish to waive the right of anonymity by indicating that you wish to be identified in the study. Your name will not be recorded anywhere and no one, apart from the researcher, will know about your involvement in this research if you wish to remain anonymous.

**g) Are there any negative consequences for me if I participate in the research project?**

Although this may be a sensitive study, there are no physical harmful risks identified in participating in the study. As mentioned above, the researcher will take all measures to the best of her ability to assure your anonymity and the confidentiality of the information.

**h) How will the researcher(s) protect the security of data?**

The researcher will ensure anonymity and confidentiality by storing the hard copy of transcribed notes in a lock-up safety box. Electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer. Both hard copy and electronic documents containing your information will be destroyed after five of completing the study. Your identity will not be mentioned in the study. You will be referred to with the use of a pseudonym.

**i) Will I receive payment or any incentives for participating in this study?**

There will be no incentives or payments made for your participation in the study. In addition, you, the participant will not need to incur any financial costs by participating in the study.

**k) How will I be informed of the findings/results of the research?**

Findings from the study will be available online once the examination process of the dissertation has been completed. You are welcome to contact me, Nokonwaba Mnguni (nzandilemnguni@gmail.com) for further information in this regard.

Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted,

you may contact (Dr Mahlogonolo Thobane at [kwadims@unisa.ac.za](mailto:kwadims@unisa.ac.za)) or the Chair of Ethics Research Committee (Professor N Mollema at [@mollena@unisa.ac.za](mailto:@mollena@unisa.ac.za)).

### **CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY**

I \_\_\_\_\_ (participants name), confirm that the researcher asking my consent to take part in this research study has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience I can expect if I participate in the study. I have been informed (in writing or orally) and understand the purpose of the study and what will be expected of me.

I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and I am prepared to participate in the study. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.

I have received a signed copy of the specific consent agreement.

Participants Name & Surname .....

Participants signature ..... Date.....

Researchers Name & Surname .....

Researchers Signature ..... Date.....

## ANNEXURE B: UNISA ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE



### UNISA CLAW ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date 20180831

Reference: ST80 of 2018

Applicant: NZ Mnguni

Dear Ms Mnguni

**Decision: ETHICS APPROVAL  
FROM 31 AUGUST 2018  
TO 30 AUGUST 2021**

**Researcher(s):** Nokonwaba Zandile Mnguni

**Supervisor(s):** Dr MS Thobane

**A criminological exploration of female drug mules incarcerated in South African correctional facilities**

**Qualification:** MA (Criminal Justice)

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the Unisa CLAW Ethics Review Committee for the above mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for 3 years.

*The **low risk application** was reviewed by the CLAW Ethics Review Committee on 31 August 2018 in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment. The decision was ratified by the committee.*

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.
2. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the CLAW Committee.
3. The researcher will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.



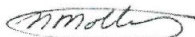
University of South Africa  
Preller Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane  
PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South Africa  
Telephone: +27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: +27 12 429 4150  
[www.unisa.ac.za](http://www.unisa.ac.za)

4. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing, accompanied by a progress report.
5. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
6. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data requires additional ethics clearance.
7. No field work activities may continue after the expiry date of 30 August 2021. Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

**Note:**

*The reference number ST80 of 2018 should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.*

Yours sincerely,



PROF N MOLLEMA

Chair of CLAW ERC

E-mail: [mollen@unisa.ac.za](mailto:mollen@unisa.ac.za)

Tel: (012) 429-8384



PROF CI TSHOOSE

Executive Dean: CLAW

E-mail: [tshooci@unisa.ac.za](mailto:tshooci@unisa.ac.za)

Tel: (012) 429-2005



## **ANNEXURE C: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

**Researcher:** Nokonwaba Mnguni

**Interviewee:** Participant

**Race/Nationality:**

**Venue:**

**Date:**

### **A. BIOGRAPHY**

1. How old are you?
2. Are you married? And do you have any children?
3. How would you describe your social/economic background?
4. Do you have any siblings? Brothers or sisters.
5. Which country/province are you from?
6. Did you go to school?
7. Were you working before you were imprisoned?
8. How old were you when you were arrested?
9. What is your current sentence?
10. How long have you been imprisoned?
11. How would you describe your economic status before you were involved or sentenced for drug trafficking? How were you financially?

### **B. RECRUITMENT PROCESS AND SMUGGLING OF DRUGS**

12. When did you start smuggling drugs?

13. Were you recruited into smuggling drugs/ if so, how?
14. What were your reasons for smuggling drugs?
15. Were you aware that you were smuggling drugs?
16. Did you receive payment for smuggling drugs, if so how much?
17. Where did you smuggle the drugs to?
18. Where did you smuggle the drugs from?
19. Was it your first time committing this crime?
20. Why do you think you were targeted or chosen to smuggle drugs?
21. Did you receive assistance or training in smuggling drugs?
22. What type of drugs have you smuggled?
23. Do you know other drug mules, or were you working with other drug mules?

### **C. METHODS USED TO SMUGGLE DRUGS**

24. How did you smuggle the drugs?
25. Were you able to voice your opinion about the way you smuggled the drugs?
26. Tell me about the day you were caught, when you were arrested.
27. How were the drugs found?
28. What happened after the drugs were found?

**THANK YOU. INTERVIEW CONCLUDED.**

## ANNEXURE D: DCS RESEARCH PERMISSION LETTER



### correctional services

Department:  
Correctional Services  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Private Bag X136, PRETORIA, 0001 Poyntons Building, C/O WF Nkomo and Sophie De Bruyn Street, PRETORIA  
Tel (012) 307 2770

**Ms NZ Mnguni**  
**4 Khayalala**  
**Greenshank Street**  
**Grobespark**  
**Roodepoort**  
**1724**

Dear Ms NZ Mnguni

**RE: APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONAL SERVICES ON: "A CRIMINOLOGICAL EXPLORATION OF FEMALE DRUG MULES INCARCERATED AT KGOŠI MAMPURU II AND JOHANNESBURG FEMALE CORRECTIONAL CENTRES"**

It is with pleasure to inform you that your request to conduct research in the Department of Correctional Services on the above topic has been approved.

Your attention is drawn to the following:

- This ethics approval is valid from **20 March 2019 to 19 March 2022**.
- The relevant Regional and Area Commissioners where the research will be conducted will be informed of your proposed research project.
- Your internal guide will be **Ms ME Motsamai: Regional Head, Corrections, Gauteng**.
- You are requested to contact her at telephone number (012) 420 0169 before the commencement of your research.
- It is your responsibility to make arrangements for your interviewing times.
- Your identity document and this approval letter should be in your possession when visiting.
- You are required to use the terminology used in the White Paper on Corrections in South Africa (February 2005) e.g. "Offenders" not "Prisoners" and "Correctional Centres" not "Prisons".
- You are not allowed to use photographic or video equipment during your visits, however the audio recorder is allowed.
- You are required to submit your final report to the Department for approval by the Commissioner of Correctional Services before publication (including presentation at workshops, conferences, seminars, etc) of the report.
- Should you have any enquiries regarding this process, please contact the DCS REC Administration for assistance at telephone number (012) 307 2770.

Thank you for your application and interest to conduct research in the Department of Correctional Services.

Yours faithfully

**ND SIHLEZANA**  
**DC: POLICY COORDINATION & RESEARCH**  
**DATE: 22/03/2019**

## ANNEXURE E: TURN-IT-IN SIMILARITY REPORT

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feedback studio N Z MNGUNI | A CRIMINOLOGICAL EXPLORATION OF FEMALE DRUG MULES INCARCERATED AT KGOŠI MAMPURU AND JOHANNESBURG CORRECTIONAL CENTRES

**A CRIMINOLOGICAL EXPLORATION OF FEMALE DRUG MULES  
INCARCERATED IN KGOŠI MAMPURU II AND JOHANNESBURG FEMALE  
CORRECTIONAL CENTRES**

by

**NOKONWABA ZANDILE MNGUNI**

<sup>1</sup> submitted in accordance with the requirements for  
the degree of

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# ANNEXURE F: DRUGS AND DRUG TRAFFICKING ACT 140 OF 1992.

## PART II, SCHEDULE 2

### Schedule 2

[Schedule 2 amended by Government Notice No. R.1765 of 1 November 1996, by Government Notice No. R.760 of 11 June 1999 and by Government Notice No. R.521 of 15 June 2001.]

#### PART II

##### *Dangerous Dependence-Producing Substances*

1. The following substances or plants, namely—

Acetorphine.

Acetyldihydrocodeine, except preparations and mixtures containing not more than 20 milligrams of acetyldihydrocodeine per recommended or prescribed dose.

Acetylmethadol.

Alfentanil.

Allylprodine.

Alphacetylmethadol.

Alphameprodine.

Alphamethadol.

Alphaprodine.

Anileridine.

Benzethidine.

Benzphetamine.

Benzylmorphine.

Betacetylmethadol.

Betameprodine.

Betamethadol.

Betaprodine.

Bezitramide.

Butorphanol.

Chlorodyne (Chloroform and Morphine Tincture BP 1980) or any preparation or mixture thereof described as chlorodyne, except preparations and mixtures containing not more than 5,0 per cent of chlorodyne in combination with other active medicinal substances.

Clonitazene.

Coca leaf and any salt, compound, derivative or preparation of coca leaf, and any salt, compound, derivative or preparation thereof that is chemically equivalent or identical to any of these substances, whether obtained directly or indirectly by extraction from material or substances obtained from plants, or obtained independently by chemical synthesis, or by a combination of extraction and chemical synthesis, except decocainized coca leaf and extractions of coca leaf where such extractions contain no cocaine or ecgonine.

Codeine (methymorphine), except preparations and mixtures containing not more than 20 milligrams of codeine per recommended or prescribed dose.

Codoxime.

Desomorphine.

Dextromoramide.

Dextropropoxyphene, except preparations and mixtures for oral use containing not more than 135 milligrams dextropropoxyphene, calculated as the base, per dosage unit, or with a concentration of not more than 2,5 per cent in undivided preparations.

Diampromide.

Diethylthiambutene.

Difenoxin (or diphenoxylate), except mixtures containing, per dosage unit, not more than 0,5 milligrams of difenoxin, calculated as the base, and a quantity of atropine sulphate equal to at least 5,0 per cent of the quantity of difenoxin, calculated as the base, which is present in the mixture.

Dihydrocodeine, except preparations and mixtures containing not more than 20 milligrams of dihydrocodeine per recommended or prescribed dose.

Dihydroetorphine.

Dihydromorphine.

Dimenoxadol.

Dimepseptanol.

Dimethylthiambutene.

Dioxaphetylbutyrate.

Diphenoxylate, except preparations containing not more than 2,5 milligrams of diphenoxylate, calculated as the base, and not less than 25 micrograms of atropine sulphate per dosage unit.

Dipipanone.

Dronabinol [(+)-transdelta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol].

Drotebanol.

Ecgonine and the esters and derivatives thereof which are convertible to ecgonine and cocaine.

Ethylmethylthiambutene.

Ethylmorphine, except preparations and mixtures containing not more than 20 milligrams of ethylmorphine per recommended or prescribed dose.

Etonitazene.

Etorphine and analogues.

Etoperidone.

Fenproporex.

Fentanyl.

Furethidine.

Hydrocodone (dihydrocodeinone).

Hydromorphanol (14-hydroxydihydromorphine).

Hydromorphone (dihydromorphine).

Hydroxypethidine.

Isomethadone.

Ketobemidone.  
 Levomoramide.  
 Levophenacymorphan.  
 Levorphanol.  
 Mecloqualone.  
 Mefenorex.  
 Metazocine.  
 Methadone.  
 Methadone-intermediate.  
 Methorphan, including levomethorphan and racemethorphan, but excluding dextromethorphan.  
 Methyldesorphine.  
 Methyldihydromorphine.  
 Methylphenidate and the derivatives thereof.  
 Metopon.  
 Moramide-intermediate.  
 Morpheridine.  
 Morphine, except preparations and mixtures of morphine containing not more than 0,2 per cent of morphine, calculated as anhydrous morphine.  
 Morphine methobromide and other pentavalent nitrogen morphine derivatives.  
 Morphine-N-oxide and the derivatives thereof.  
 Myrophine (myristylbenzylmorphine).  
 Nicocodine.  
 Nicodicodine.  
 Nicomorphine.  
 Noracymethadol.  
 Norcodeine, except preparations and mixtures containing not more than 20 milligrams norcodeine per recommended or prescribed dose.  
 Norlevorphanol.  
 Normethadone.  
 Normorphine (demethylmorphine or N-demethylated morphine).  
 Norpipanone.  
 Opium and opiates and any salt, compound, derivative or preparation of opium or opiates, whether obtained directly or indirectly by extraction from material or substances obtained from plants, or obtained independently by chemical synthesis, or by a combination of extraction and chemical synthesis, except mixtures containing not more than 0,2 per cent of morphine, calculated as anhydrous morphine.  
 Opium-poppy and poppy straw, whether obtained directly or indirectly by extraction from material or substances obtained from plants, or whether obtained independently by chemical synthesis, or by a

combination of extraction and chemical synthesis.

Oxycodone (14-hydroxydihydrocodeinone or dihydrohydroxycodone).

Oxymorphone (14-hydroxydihydromorphinone or dihydrohydroxymorphinone).

Pethidine, pethidine-intermediate A, pethidine-intermediate B and pethidine-intermediate C.

Phenadoxone.

Phenampromide.

Phenazocine.

Phendimetrazine.

Phenomorphan.

Phenoperidine.

Pholcodine, except preparations and mixtures containing not more than 20 milligrams of pholcodine per recommended or prescribed dose.

Piminodine.

Piritramide.

Proheptazine.

Properidine.

Propiram.

Racemoramide.

Racemorphan.

Remifentanyl.

Secobarbital.

Sufentanyl.

Thebacon.

Thebaine.

Tilidine.

Trimeperidine.

Zipeprol.

2. Unless expressly excluded, all substances or plants included in this Part include the following:

- (a) The isomers of the specified substances or plants, where the existence of such isomers is possible;
- (b) the esters and ethers of the specified substances or plants and of the isomers referred to in subparagraph (a), as well as the isomers of such esters and ethers, where the existence of such esters, ethers and isomers is possible;
- (c) the salts of the specified substances or plants, of the isomers referred to in subparagraph (a) and of the esters, ethers and isomers referred to in subparagraph (b), as well as the isomers of such salts, where the existence of such salts and isomers is possible; and
- (d) all preparations and mixtures of the specified substances or plants and of the isomers, esters, ethers and salts referred to in this paragraph.



PART III

*Undesirable Dependence-Producing Substances*

1. The following substances or plants, namely—

Amphetamine.

Brolamfetamine.

4-bromo-2,5-dimethoxyphenethylamine (2C-B), ("Nexus").

Bufotenine (N,N-dimethylserotonin).

Cannabis (dagga), the whole plant or any portion thereof, except dronabinol [(*-*)-transdelta-9 tetrahydrocannabinol].

Cathinone.

Dexamphetamine.

Diethyltryptamine [3-(2-(diethylamino)-ethyl)-indole; cb.

2,5-dimethoxyamphetamine (DMA).

2,5-dimethoxy-4-ethylamphetamine (DOET).

( $\pm$ )-N, $\alpha$ - dimethyl-3,4-(methylenedioxy) phenethylamine (3,4-methylenedioxyamfetamine (MDMA).

3-(1,2-dimethylheptyl)-7,8,9,10-tetrahydro-6,6,9-trimethyl-6*H*-dibenzo [*b*, *d*] pyran-1-ol (DMHP).

Dimethyltryptamine [3-(2-(dimethylamino)-ethyl)-indole].

Etryptamine (3-(2-aminobutyl)indole).

Fenetylline.

Fentanyl-analogues:

acetyl-alpha-methyl-fentanyl;

alpha-methyl-fentanyl;

alpha-methyl-fentanyl-acetanilide;

alpha-methyl-thio-fentanyl;

benzyl-fentanyl;

beta-hydroxy-fentanyl;

beta-hydroxy-3-methyl-fentanyl;

3-methyl-fentanyl and the two isomeric forms thereof, namely,

cis-N-(3-methyl-1-(2-phenethyl)-4-piperidyl)propionanilide and trans-N-(3-methyl-1-(2-phenethyl)-4-piperidyl)propionanilide;

3-methyl-thio-fentanyl;

para-fluoro-fentanyl; and

thiofentanyl.

- Gamma-hydroxybutyrate (GHB).
- Harmaline (3,4-dihydroharmine).
- Harmine [7-methoxy-1-methyl-9H-pyrido (3,4-b)-indole].
- Herion (diacetylmorphine).
- Levamphetamine.
- Levomethamphetamine.
- Lysergide (lysergic acid diethylamide).
- Mescaline (3,4,5-trimethoxyphenethylamine).
- Methamphetamine and methamphetamine racemate.
- Methaqualone, including Mandrax, Isonox, Quaalude, or any other preparation containing methaqualone and known by any other trade name.
- Methcathinone (2-(methylamino)-1-phenylpropan-1-one).
- 2-methoxy-4,5-methylenedioxyamphetamine (MMDA).
- 4-methylaminorex.
- 4-methyl-2,5-dimethoxyamphetamine (DOM) and the derivatives thereof.
- Methylenedioxyamphetamine (MDA):
- N-ethyl-methylenedioxyamphetamine; and
  - N-hydroxy-methylenedioxyamphetamine.
- Nabilone.
- Parahexyl.
- Paramethoxyamphetamine (PMA).
- Phencyclidine and the congeners thereof, namely, N-ethyl-1-phenylcyclohexylamine (PCE), 1-(1-phenylcyclohexyl) pyrrolidine (PHP or PCPY) and 1- [1-(2-thienyl) cyclohexyl] piperidine (TCP).
- Pethidine-analogues:
- 1-methyl-4-phenyl-4-propionyloxy-piperidine (MPPP);
  - 1-methyl-4-phenyl-1,2,5,6-tetrahydropiperidine (MPTP); and
  - 1-phenylethyl-4-phenyl-4-acetyloxy-piperidine (PEPAP).
- Phenmetrazine.
- Psilocin (4-hydroxydimethyltryptamine).
- Psilocybin (4-phosphoryloxy-N,N-dimethyltryptamine).
- Tetrahydrocannabinol.
- 3,4,5-trimethoxy amphetamine (TMA).
2. Unless expressly excluded, all substances or plants included in this Part include the following:
- (a) The isomers of the specified substances or plants, where the existence of such isomers is possible;
  - (b) the esters and ethers of the specified substances or plants and of the isomers referred to in subparagraph (a), as well as the isomers of such esters and ethers, where the existence of such esters, ethers and isomers is possible;
  - (c) the salts of the specified substances or plants, of the isomers referred to in subparagraph (a) and of the esters, ethers and isomers referred to in subparagraph (b), as well as the isomers of such salts, where the existence of such salts and isomers is possible; and
  - (d) all preparations and mixtures of the specified substances or plants and of the isomers, esters, ethers and salts referred to in this paragraph.

**ANNEXURE G: LANGUAGE AND TECHNICAL EDITING  
CONFIRMATION LETTER**

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**To whom it may concern**

This letter serves to inform you that I have done language editing, reference checking and formatting on the dissertation

**A CRIMINOLOGICAL EXPLORATION OF FEMALE DRUG MULES  
INCARCERATED IN KGOŠI MAMPURU II AND JOHANNESBURG FEMALE  
CORRECTIONAL CENTRES**

by

**NOKONWABA ZANDILE MNGUNI**



Barbara Shaw

06/05/2020.